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Twentieth Century English

Twentieth Century ENGLISH

Edited by
WILLIAM S. KNICKERBOCKER

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I inscribe this book affectionately
to a generous friend,
The Headmaster of the Loomis School,
NATHANIEL HORTON BATCHELDER

FOREWORD

This collection of thirty-six essays stresses the idea that better understanding and use of English is a liberalizing power.

Today one feels compelled again to say that competency in the use of our language is a basic necessity for a free way of life. The language itself has emerged from the special conditions of freedom which made the English-speaking peoples what they are. There can be no "free way of life" unless "freedom" means a condition which must be vigilantly maintained by the advocacy of human rights, discussion, and criticism; these need a competent sense of the effectiveness of our tongue. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pitchers of silver." Without an intelligent and constant scrutiny of our language (conscience in the selection of the words we use, and alertness when used by others), we are subject to risks and liabilities of what we prize so highly: our birthright. From the first essay in this book, "The Crisis in Modern Literature", to the last, "Why Read Milton Now?", the interaction of English as a liberating power and as a necessary discipline in democratic procedures has guided me in the selection and arrangement of the material.

Thus, in presenting this symposium, I have had a conscious intention to have this book contribute to the rehabilitation of our traditional way of life. Perhaps, in the midst of all the confusion and collisions of the last

quarter-century—conflicts of opinions and of ideologies—the vigor of our democratic tradition is clear in the current concern about the nature of English. Experimentalists of the more adventurous variety (like James Joyce and Gertrude Stein) have performed feats which call for a fresh understanding of what our language is. Articles in periodicals, ranging from the most technical to the most popular, as well as books on differing aspects of the subject, constantly appeared (like Hayakawa's *Language in Action,* and Stuart Chase's *The Tyranny of Words*), and are likely still to appear.

Matters like semantics, Basic English, the relation of vocabulary and success, the effect of reading upon mental health, obscurity in poetry, and the new criticism, are discussed in this symposium. The essays reveal lines of direction and clarify for the general reader what the struggles in sectors like these are about. The contributors are experienced writers and teachers, fully aware of the difficulties they discuss and disposed to explain in fair words their own solutions.

Most of the essays were written especially for this volume; others have appeared in magazines. To the editors of those periodicals who have given permission to reprint, I am much indebted; to *College English* ("The Crisis of Modern Literature" by Carl F. Strauch; "The Future of Poetry", by Louise Pound; "Seniors Plan a Basic Library", by Isadora W. Miles; "Let's Teach Composition" by Edward W. Hamilton); to Columbia University Press, publishers of *American Speech* ("Linguistics and the Future" by S. A. Hayakawa; "Designations for Colored

Folk" by H. L. Mencken); to *The Atlantic Monthly* ("Vocabulary and Success" by Johnson O'Connor; "The Word and the Fact", by Archibald MacLeish; and "Idle Fears About Basic English", by I. A. Richards); to *ETC., A Review of General Semantics* ("You Can't Write Writing" by Wendell Johnson); to *The Modern Schoolman* ("The Meaning of the New Criticism", by Walter J. Ong, S. J.); to *View* ("Five Master Terms" by Kenneth Burke); to *Harper's Magazine* ("The Plight of the Dramatist" by Walter Pritchard Eaton; and to *Good Housekeeping* ("Parents, It's Your Fault", by Norris E. Orchard.)

Also, I wish here to acknowledge my gratitude to the writers of all of the essays, already published and those published here for the first time, for their ready response in making this book available. Assembling of their comments in so accessible a form will, should make this book welcome to thoughtful readers generally; particularly to English teachers, and to those who want to write more effectively.

WILLIAM S. KNICKERBOCKER

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I

DIRECTIONS

THE CRISIS IN MODERN LITERATURE

By

CARL F. STRAUCH

Modern literature is threatened with nothing less than death. Some fifteen years ago Max Eastman wrote a brilliant and amusing book in which he declared that, as exact knowledge, or science, invades areas hitherto considered peculiarly the domain of literature, literature must necessarily restrict its pretensions to more modest limits.[1] Mr. Eastman delighted those who preferred Alfred Tennyson to E. E. Cummings with his sharp attack on poets talking to themselves.[2] It is possible, however, that novelists who have addressed a public—whether that public belongs blandly to Booth Tarkington or heatedly to John Steinbeck—are contributing little more to literature than were Mr. Eastman's private poets.

It is not literature that is threatened by science so much as it is man who is threatened by the view which during four painful centuries he has been developing about himself and the world he lives in. The problem which Mr. Eastman presented he himself solved;[3] but the crisis in modern literature goes much deeper, and no one person can hope to save both man and his literature. Man will want consciously and desperately to achieve the consolation and create the beauty we have always called literature. But he is in grave danger of losing the trick altogether. I call this threat the degradation of man.

For the origin of the present crisis we must return to 1543, about four hundred years ago, when Copernicus' *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies* was published.

The degradation of man is the now centuries-old and ever deepening conviction that his place in the universe is not so

glorious as the Middle Ages had thought; that the universe has for man neither meaning nor purpose; that, indeed, man is an animal, the natural product of a natural world.

"Now," says Bertrand Russell, "there is nothing in the Copernican astronomy to *prove* that we are less important than we naturally suppose ourselves to be, but the dethronement of our planet from its central position suggests to the imagination a similar dethronement of its inhabitants."[4] The theologians of Copernicus' day and even of much later times were aware that the new astronomy would be a powerful weapon in the hands of those who no longer believed so completely in supernaturalism. According to the supernatural scheme, there was being enacted in the life of every Christian the drama of the salvation of his soul. The earth, the center of the universe, was the stage; the other planets, the sun, the angels and archangels, and God collaborated as audience to this most engrossing and thrilling spiritual drama. The sublimity of this view of man's destiny is beyond question; it was, however, the truth of the view that theologians shrewdly suspected would be gravely endangered if the new astronomy were accepted. "It is therefore not surprising," continues Bertrand Russell, "that the Christian Churches, Protestant and Catholic alike, felt hostility to the new astronomy, and sought out grounds for branding it as heretical."[5]

A conflict between supernaturalism and n a t u r a l i s m emerged, a conflict between man's hopes for a glorious destiny and the scientific probability that, in sad truth, man's career was as unimportant as the position of the planet he inhabited.

Copernican astronomy was still repugnant to some when in 1690 John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* attacked the notion of innate ideas. If Locke was to be believed, man did not, evidently, come into this life perfectly and beautifully equipped with ideas of God, immortality, and the like. In reality, man acquired these notions in childhood at the knees or on the laps of pious parents. A baby's brain was not packed before birth with divine certitudes that helped

to shape the man's destiny to supernatural ends. Again had supernaturalism been attacked. The universe was growing cold. Man came into life without knowledge, no better than an idiot; and he was born on a planet that without purpose cut its dreary path through an unimportant segment of a meaningless universe.

Darwin pushed the degradation further. Man was no longer to be thought of as a special creation to crown God's labors; man was, rather, an animal, the natural product of a natural world. Copernicus, Locke, Darwin — these among others in the last four centuries have aided us in arriving at the scientific probability about man and the universe he lives in. This scientific probability, however true, is hardly flattering to our self-esteem. How cheerless the view is can be seen in this passage from the most eloquent English of the early twentieth century:

> That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the débris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand.

Only the mental life of the mature human being had escaped attack. A novelist contemporary with Darwin could, like the eminently intellectual George Eliot, reproduce the psychological life of Romola as a perfectly rational pattern of intelligent and intelligible questions and answers. However bleak the universe might be, man, ironically enough, still had his intellectual pride; the brain was still a rational instrument designed to answer questions, receive new ideas, and invent philosophies. There was no associative, irrational stream of consciousness; there were no subliminal horrors, no neuroses,

no fixations, none of the ghastly troop of mental aberrations that afflict modern literature. The mind was a well-kept and orderly house, and the windowpanes were always clean. Then came Freud, and with his magic wand he transformed the brain into a menagerie of wild and ferocious beasts. The degradation of man was now complete. Supernaturalism was dead. The universe was meaningless. Man was an animal. And his brain was the abiding place of horror and madness.

Only we today are the full inheritors of this natural world, and our literature shows how it strikes our contemporaries. Some illustrations from contemporary literature may be charged with pathos or more startling vehemence if we keep in mind the natural and animal world-order of Copernicus, Locke, Darwin, and Freud. It is as though modern writers, turning to those who have revealed the scientific probability, exclaimed, "Look! These are the grim results in everyday life of the civilization we have inherited from you."

Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* are products of post-war disillusionment and cynicism; but let us for a moment regard these novels as the harvest not of four years of animal struggle but of four hundred years of animal philosophy. The precise, staccato dialogue, lacking in the usual directions of an older literary fashion ("he said, looking puzzled," "he answered in pained surprise," "he observed thoughtfully"—to show that there is a brain behind the talk), is, to be sure, a literary trick. But in the animal world which we have inherited, what is more appropriate than this staccato spittle of words divorced from the brain and for the most part devoid of reference except to animal action, bullfighting, drinking, and physical love? With Hemingway one observes a degeneration far beyond any evidence of animal behavior in Dreiser's novels. With Dreiser people are still human beings who use their brains in a way that George Eliot would have recognized. True, Dreiser stresses "chemisms" as influences upon behavior; but from three pages of *Jennie Gerhardt* one can gather the following evidence of brain behind the

talk: "he said, studying her face in a quizzical, interrogative way"; "he said, with a sense of disappointment"; "she meditated upon this a moment"; "she said, moved by a curious feeling of ingratitude."

In Hemingway's two novels a traditional life had been destroyed; and the characters must exist on the animal level, for there is no other way of life for them. No other way except, perhaps, war? The many wars since 1914 may, indeed, be offered as bloody proof out of life itself that on the animal level war is apparently the natural condition of existence. In "A Natural History of the Dead," a masterpiece of its kind, Hemingway attacks, with cold and restrained fury, the Humanists, who are blind to the facts of death in a natural world ravaged by war.[7]

Hemingway's characters took to lusting and drinking and fighting to escape, in the round of animal pleasures, a world that would be too horrible to be confronted by a man whose vision was not blurred by alcohol. It is that horrible world that in Faulkner's novels we confront without consolation, without satisfaction, without drink. In that world of unmitigated degeneration there are evidently two classes of human beings: those, like Popeye in *Sanctuary* and Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!*, who thrive because they are in their element and those more sensitive creatures for whom, since there is neither consolation nor escape, there is but one virtue — endurance. Rosa Coldfield is such a creature, and she realizes the utmost that is permitted a human being in the universe of William Faulkner:

That was the miscast summer of my barren youth which . . . . I lived out not as a woman, a girl, but rather as the man which I perhaps should have been. I was fourteen then, fourteen in years if they could have been called years while in that unpaced corridor which I called childhood, which was not living but rather some projection of the lightless womb itself; I gestate and complete, not aged, just overdue because of some caesarian lack, some cold head-nuzzling forceps of the savage time which should have torn me free, I waited not for light but for that doom which we call female victory which is: endure and

then endure, without rhyme or reason or hope of reward — and then endure. . . .[8]

Beyond this dismal point—enduring a meaningless and savage world—the degradation of man cannot go. And beyond this point literature cannot go. It is inconceivable that the old supernaturalism, which directly inspired or was implicit in so much Christian art and literature, will return to usurp the position in which the truths of naturalism are intrenched. Meanwhile, from James Joyce and Thomas Mann to William Faulkner, our contemporaries have revealed the misery and madness of a naturalistic world. Tons of books may issue from our presses, but an age like ours, having achieved a savage zero in philosophy, finally stops writing literature.

It will be said, however, that if in the last four hundred years there has been negation, there has also been affirmation. If, step by step, man has yielded up the erroneous though sublime view of the Middle Ages, he has amply compensated himself for that loss by developing an exhilarating self-esteem and a robust self-reliance. Man has gone far toward conquering the world about him; he has gone far toward conquering ancient and new tyrannies. He has discovered worlds within himself, and he has given expression to those worlds. And here, some will say, the results, in whatever direction one may look, have been great. It is true. They have been great. But who has not been aware that since the beginning of this unhappy century the vigorous, not to say ferocious, enterprise of our civilization has increasingly called forth a literature of attack and indictment?

If we take the writings inspired by blind optimism or bland acceptance, as in Edgar Guest or Lloyd C. Douglas or Booth Tarkington, and set these works aside as too trivial for serious consideration, we then have a body of contemporary writing one half of which expresses the dismal zero of the degradation of man and the other half of which is mere journalism or pamphleteering—vigorous and often able protest against injustices, readable books for the day, but seldom literature.

How one half of modern literature has become pamphleteering is apparent. In Balzac's studies of Parisian and French provincial life there was implicit the philosophy that men are chiefly motivated by the love of money. In Zola's social tracts the philosophy emerged from the background and stood before the reader equally with the characters; and, however objective Zola intended to be, the philosophy constituted an indictment of society. In John Dos Passos' picaresque pamphlets the revolutionary view of the author has submerged the characters, who are cut out of illustration board, in the contrapuntal indictment. With Upton Sinclair—and I have in mind his five latest novels with their impossible hero, Lanny Budd—fiction and pamphleteering fall clatteringly apart, and we have nothing more than a zealous and idealistic muckraker's regurgitation of the files of the *New York Times.* For literature the results are simply nil.

The vogue of John Steinbeck may inspire the claim that he, at any rate, is a pamphleteer-novelist who can give indignation a lasting significance. I doubt it. I think that at best *The Grapes of Wrath* will be remembered as another *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* with the difference that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has larger scope and more sharply although melodramatically realized characters. The charming *Tortilla Flat,* a minor classic, is Steinbeck's best contribution to literature.

The defects of one half of our literature are hysteria, perversity, self-torture, and sterility, under the baleful influence of a philosophy that has transformed us into Yahoos. The defects of the other half are weak and generalized characterization and a fanatical obsession with this year, this month, this day, this passing second. The pamphleteering-half of our literature shows that some of the affirmations of four hundred years have failed; that the self-esteem, the self-reliance, the enterprise have themselves developed excesses and abuses that intensify the degradation of man.

What hope? Four years ago Professor Howard Mumford Jones suggested that certain European influences had impaired

the innocence of American literature; as a panacea Professor Jones recommended a reaffirmation of faith in democracy.[9]

Weather is one thing, and climate another. There is hope in democracy, but only if we make democracy a climate. For the degradation of man has been a climate for four hundred years, and a little good democratic weather here and there in pinpoints of bland sunshine will not serve. Our conception of democracy must be so complete and so great that it will positively exile from our minds and lives and literature the very real horrors of the degradation of man.

We must have that warm humanity which has been increasingly absent as this century has progressed. The sort of thing I mean must not be confused with the easy sentimentality of *Tortilla Flat.* In his Preface to *The Song of Bernadette* Franz Werfel suggests the thing:

> I have dared to sing the song of Bernadette, although I am not a Catholic but a Jew; and I drew courage for this undertaking from a far older and far more unconscious vow of mine. Even in the days when I wrote my first verses I vowed that I would evermore and everywhere in all I wrote magnify the divine mystery and the holiness of man—careless of a period which has turned away with scorn and rage and indifference from these ultimate values of our mortal lot.

[1] *The Literary Mind* (New York, 1931), pp. 10-11, 36, 156-57, 212, 241, 254.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 57-78.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 161-294.
[4] *Religion and Science* (New York, 1935), p. 24.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[6] Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (New York, 1918), pp. 47-48.
[7] In *The Fifth Column . . . .* (New York, 1938), pp. 538-47.
[8] *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York, 1936), p. 144. Italics of the text.
[9] "Nobility Wanted," *Atlantic Monthly,* CLXIV (November, 1939), 646, 649.

ART AND TRUTH

By

FRED B. MILLETT

The relationship between art and truth is perhaps the most difficult as it is the most regularly recurrent of aesthetic problems.

Almost any novice is quite sure that he can distinguish between what is and what is not true; consequently, he feels that he is in a position to lay down the law about at least one term in the equation. But the individual's assurance that he can distinguish between what is and what is not true is likely to waver when one asks him what he means by truth and of what variety of truth he is speaking. For there are different kinds of truth just as there are different kinds of taxicabs, and truth, like a taxicab, has the major function of getting its possessor as rapidly and comfortably and inexpensively as possible to a desirable destination. Thus, in Gustave Lanson's observation that "The fundamental principle of the drama of Corneille is truth, resemblance to life," Lanson is obviously using truth as equivalent to verisimilitude. But whatever English readers may think of the soundness of the proposition that the fundamental principle of the rarefied and idealized art of Corneille is its verisimilitude, it is certainly not the relationship between art and verisimilitude with which we are here concerned, although the concept has frequently been invoked as a criterion of evaluation of art in one or another of the major modes.

Nor is it scientific truth that is in question. It has already been given too much attention in this connection. The "truth" of a scientific statement is, as I. A. Richards says, "ultimately a matter of verification as this is understood in the laboratory."

A scientific statement "is justified by its truth, i.e., its correspondence, in a highly technical sense, with the fact to which it points." But the place for the demonstration of such truths is, obviously, not the poet's desk, but the laboratory. If scientific truths have any place in works of art, that place is incidental and supplementary. In realistic works of art, we have a right perhaps to demand that the acts of the characters shall not exceed the limits of what we consider possible in view of our knowledge of human powers. But it would be absurd to expect scientific truths to appear, other than incidentally, in romantic or classical literature. The deeds of Gargantua and Beowulf, of Odysseus and Don Quixote, need hardly meet the tests of scientific truth.

And yet the extraordinarily high values that have accrued to scientific truth have bewildered and intimidated aestheticians confronted by the dilemma of art *vs.* truth. If art is not concerned with the presentation of scientific truths, if it cannot be submitted to the test of scientific truth, is it not then inevitably inferior in value to works presenting such truths? There are many evidences of aestheticians' feelings of discomfort when questions of this sort are raised. Such embarrassment is, for example, clearly indicated in Richards' distinction between a scientific statement and a pseudo-statement, which he defines as an "emotive utterance, where 'truth' is primarily acceptability by some attitude, and more remotely is the acceptability of this attitude itself." To describe the "truths" in works of art as pseudo-statements at once invests them with an aura of condescension and suspicion. And when Richards goes on to correlate scientific statements with intellectual belief and pseudo-statements with emotional belief (which he practically equates with Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief"), he is again betraying his subservience to the Moloch of science.

It cannot be said too forcefully that scientific truths are of little or no importance in works of art, and they are of far less importance in life than most scientists would have us be-

lieve. If man does not live by bread alone, neither does he live by physical or chemical formulas. Man lives, not by scientific truths, but by unscientific beliefs and it is not with the former but with the latter that artists and aestheticians are concerned. I am not denying that there is or may be or should be a relationship between truth and belief. The discovery and dissemination of scientific truths about the physical universe tend to modify the systematic or unsystematic array of beliefs by which people live. The demonstration of the truth of the Copernican system led to a momentous modification of man's conception of the significance of the earth and its crawling inhabitants. Despite the hostility and suppressive activities of ignorant or obscurantist communities and creeds, the demonstration of the truth of evolution has changed beyond recognition our ways of thinking about man as an individual and man as a member of a social group. But although what science teaches is bound to modify beliefs, scientific truth can never become a substitute for belief, because science is limited in its statements to facts and the relation between facts and has nothing legitimate to say concerning values. Moreover, scientific statements can never assume the primacy of beliefs, since man, even at his most wretched, lives in a world, not of objective demonstrable facts, but of subjective indemonstrable values.

Men's beliefs rise out of those feelings, emotions, ideas, and ideals which distinguish human from sub-human behavior. In some rare human beings, these feelings and ideas have been wrought into a coherent, controlled, and poised personality-pattern. In even rarer human beings, these values have been subjected to a process of rationalization, classification, and systematization by which something like a coherent philosophy of life becomes the core of existence. But most men and women, however frantically and courageously they struggle, fall far short of such systematization, and, in consequence, they are the victims of irrational and contradictory emotions, of regressions to the infantile and the primitive, or of conflicts between self-interest and disinterestedness, between the claims

of the active and those of the contemplative existence. Men's beliefs, then, are those partially rational, partially irrational conclusions by which they live. The highly organized personality possesses a coherently organized system of beliefs. The loosely organized personality or the highly organized personality in moments of fatigue or excitement finds it easy to entertain beliefs that are mutually contradictory and exclusive. But, in every case, the beliefs are *matters, not of fact, but of faith,* since they are ultimately scientifically indemonstrable.

But so important to us are these beliefs, so constantly do we depend on them for the maintenance of our morale and self-respect that we irrationally attribute to them the demonstrable character of scientific truth, and talk glibly if warrantably of religious, ethical, or political truths. The transition from belief as belief to belief as truth is not merely extraordinarily easy but entirely defensible. For what I believe *is* the truth to me, no matter how irrational or indefensible it may appear to persons fortified by even more irrational beliefs. A belief in immortality is certainly as real and in a sense is as true as the scientific fact of the roundness of the earth. To ascribe reality to a scientific fact and unreality to a belief is to assume as demonstrated a conception of reality that is indemonstrable. The objectively experienced apple is no more real than the feeling of fear, the emotion of patriotism, or the idea of asceticism. But science is in perpetual conflict with any system of values, whether they be religious or political, ethical or aesthetic. So to both the organized and the disorganized personality, the problem of value and the relationships between kinds of values is all-important, since it is not facts but values that furnish not merely the raw material but the towering structure of any pinnacle of values.

This oversimplified analysis of the relation between scientific facts and nonscientific values, between belief and truth, may clear the ground for the essential problem of the relationship between those values that we call aesthetic and those philosophical or political values that we call beliefs.

It is surely a matter for indubitable congratulation that a great many works of art exist to which a purely aesthetic approach is appropriate and adequate. In such delectable poems as Herrick's "Corinna's going a-Maying," Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud," or Keat's "The Eve of St Agnes," it would be difficult, if not impossible, to discover philosophical generalizations about the nature of man or the world, or the place of man in the world. As in such examples of the pictorial arts as Whistler's *Nocturnes* or Monet's *Nénuphars,* it would be preposterous to raise the moral-philosophical issue. Not all works of art, then, contain truths or doctrines with which it is impossible to deal on merely aesthetic terms.

But in literary works of any extent, particularly in works of art which represent characters in action, the relations of the characters and the nature of their actions are bound to have ethical connotations which may arouse moral approbation or indignation, even though no moral truth has been expressed explicitly. Moreover, many very brief poems, most narrative and dramatic works, and certainly all such didactic works as Pope's *Essay on Man* or the offerings in church hymnals contain numerous implicit and frequently many explicit truths or doctrines with which the critic must deal if he is not to ignore one of the undoubted values that works of art embody.

The types of truths which at one or another time have created critical difficulties may be classed roughly as religious, philosophical, political, and ethical. The particular variety of ethical truth that provokes the most frequent controversy is that rising out of sexual behavior, although, at the moment, the presence of political truths in works of art is the chief cause of critical bewilderment. Success in coping with truths of whatever sort will be achieved only if the critical procedure depends on the most tenable aesthetic proposition discoverable.

One proposition that has been put forward with regard to the relationship between art and truth is that there can be or should be no relationship between them. Defenders of this

principle invoke the authority of no less distinguished a philosopher than Plato, who, at least in certain dialogues, denied the power of works of art to convey truths, because of the remoteness of art from the final Platonic reality. From this source has stemmed a series of puritanical attacks on the arts as so essentially frivolous and insignificant as to be worthless, if not actually noxious. Adherents of the theory that art should not attempt to present truths belong, in the main, to the aesthetic or the decadent group. The decadent position reveals itself upon analysis to mean the exclusion from the arts of truths unpalatable to the decadents and the inclusion of their own pet truths. It is only to the inclusion of conventional or sentimentalized moral truths that the decadents object. To the embodiment in works of art of truths conventionally regarded as immoral or subversive, the decadents raise no objections: indeed, they devote their energies to the propagation of such truths. When, on the other hand, an aesthetic like George Moore sets out to exclude from his *Anthology of Pure Poetry* all poetry containing doctrinal elements, the impoverished character of the result suggests the essential inadequacy of the principle of selection. The pure aesthete's contention that art should not concern itself with the persuasive communication of truths rests, finally, on the untenable assumption, not only that the aesthetic man can be isolated from the economic or the moral man, but also that there is no cross influence, no interplay of significant experience between the aesthetic and the economic man, or the aesthetic and the moral man. The impossibility of isolating the aesthetic state has been sufficiently demonstrated by I. A. Richards in his *Principles of Literary Criticism.* The principle of the separation of art and truth is unsound, because it assumes an isolation of the aesthetic experience, an illusory abstraction from experience, because its application involves the exclusion of major works of art of any magnitude, and because it is frequently only a camouflage for the inclusion of unconventional or immoral "truths".

ART AND TRUTH

Probably the most popular proposition with regard to the relation between art and truth is that art should restrict itself to the expression of those truths held to be self-evident by the particular individual or organization engaged in practical criticism. This principle underlies all efforts to censor works of art, whether the censor be such an organization as the Legion of Decency, the Communist Party, the Watch and Ward Society, or the Society for the Suppression of Vice, or such super-aesthetic individuals as Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, or the chief of police of Boston, Massachusetts. The implications of this principle are two: first, that books containing my truths are good books; second, that books containing your truths (provided that they are not mine also) are bad books. The result of an application of this principle is a tangle of contradictory absurdities: the condemnation by Marxian critics of works that are bourgeois in origin or ideology; the destruction of liberal or radical works in Italy or Germany, in Montreal or Pittsburgh; the legal suppression and persecution of such works as D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and James Joyce's *Ulysses;* the banning of *The Green Pastures* by the Lord Chamberlain of England; the petty censorship and blacklisting of books by customs officials and public librarians from New York to Traverse City.

The implications in such a principle need hardly to be expressed to reveal their absurdity. Fundamentally, the principle arises from a state of intellectual and spiritual arrogance that confers upon a particular system of political and ethical ideas the character of infallibility. Its application necessitates the consideration and exaltation of the moral value of a work to the exclusion of a consideration of its aesthetic values. It involves, for instance, the evaluation of religious poetry in terms of its theological soundness and not in terms of its aesthetic effectiveness, or of a radical novel or play in terms of its fidelity to orthodox or unorthodox political tenets. Hence arise the banality and bathos of most of the hymns and poetry favored by clergymen and other professional dealers in inspira-

tion, and the crudity and obviousness of most left-wing literature. Tenacious adherence to this principle results in a deliberate narrowing of one's educative aesthetic experience and a progressive desiccation, not merely of the aesthetic but of the ideational and moral aspects of the personality.

The most tenable of all the propositions concerning the relation between art and truth is that truths in art are of value whether they are the writer's truths or the reader's truths, and whether or not the reader's and the writer's truths coincide. The question will immediately be raised as to how truths alien to the reader can have any value for him. They can have no value for him, of course, if he closes his mind completely to them. They can be of value to him only if he gives himself to them, allows them to operate upon him without inhibition. If, in other words, he trains himself in a willing suspension of belief in his own truths and a willing, though momentary, adoption of truths that are not identical with his own beliefs, all sorts of desirable consequences may ensue: the increased plasticity of his moral personality; the development of tolerance of ideas alien to his own; the extension, not the wilful limitation, of his emotional and ideational experience; the refinement and subtilization of his critical responses; the ultimate profound enrichment of his personality. Such a procedure should make it possible for the atheist to understand and enjoy the religious poetry of John Donne, the ascetic to appreciate the paganism of Omar Khayyam, the Marxian to delight in the psychological subtleties of that grand old parasite, Henry James, the normal personality to tolerate the abnormality of Proust's *Cities of the Plain,* the optimist to find illumination in the pessimism of Hardy's *The Dynasts* or Huxley's *Point Counter Point.*

But even though all truths in works of art should be given a courteous, attentive, and sympathetic hearing, not all truths in works of art are equally valuable. It is as important to discriminate between the values of truths in works of art as it is to discriminate between degrees of other kinds of excellence

in art. The problem of discrimination is difficult but not impossible, provided the critic realizes that it is not his job to decide upon the validity of the truths but upon their psychological utility. Certain elements condition the values of such truths. There seems, for example, to be a fairly high correlation between the physical magnitude of a work of art and its ideational grandeur. Instances, of course, will immediately come to mind of works of art very modest in size with a high intellectual content and of works of art on a large scale that are painfully devoid of ideas. But, at any rate, a work very modest in size can hardly be expected to embody and communicate a very rich or complex world view, although romantically expansive poets like Wordsworth and Tennyson have attempted to press infinite riches into a little room. Smaller works of art may properly express simple, intensely felt, though limited and incomplete truths. Works considerable in extent may be expected to embody a more inclusive, complex, and balanced reading of life. Granted that such works as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Huxley's *Point Counter Point* hardly manifest an unbiased view of man and his behavior. The satirical intention that encourages in these works the worm's eye view of life justifies their exception from the general rule.

But it is not merely a variety of possible views of life that we may expect to find in works of some magnitude. It is not enough to recognize the legitimacy of the opposition in Shakespeare's *King Lear* between the morality of Edgar's

> The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to scourge us

and that of Gloucester's

> As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods
> They kill us for their sport.

We may also hope that the multiplicity of views, pessimistic and optimistic, cynical and sentimental, bawdy and ascetic, shall by the largeness of the author's spirit and the power of

his transforming imagination be fused into a harmony that, for the moment, is as compelling and climactic as the resounding finale of a symphony. Such an effect of harmonization of seemingly contradictory elements is inevitably infrequent, but when it occurs, as in Shakespear's *King Lear,* Homer's *Odyssey,* or Joyce's *Ulysses,* the achievement adds stature to the human spirit, reveals an heroic significance in man's eternal adventure.

POETRY AND SCIENCE

By

CHARLES I. GLICKSBERG

Probably no subject of speculation has called forth more delirious nonsense than that dealing with the relation of poetry to science. On the one hand, the poets are told that their days are numbered. In the future, science will take over the truth-telling function which poets performed in the past. The poets, Max Eastman bluntly declares, do not know what they are talking about. But he offers them some consolation by assuring them that their task is not to furnish knowledge but to enrich consciousness, to intensify our awareness and enjoyment of experience for its own sake and in all its particularity and vividness. On the other hand, there are many poets and literary critics who have no intention of capitulating so easily. This is to reduce their level of aspiration to the nadir. Convinced that poets have a lofty mission to fulfill on earth, they make no bones about their irreconcilable opposition to science and their determination to fight it with every weapon at their command.

Up to a certain point their arguments are irrefutable. The language of poetry and that of science are poles apart. One is sensuous, immediate, concrete, warm, flavorsome, delighting in what is, and yet stimulating to the imagination; it is based on observation, fed on experience. The other, concerned with universals, is dry, cold, general, abstract. There is really no conflict on this issue. Who denies that this is so? No one in his right senses would insist that poets must master the technical vocabulary of science. While some scientific terms gradually become incorporated within the language of poetry, especially when they gain wide currency, the decisive influence

on poetry is not the scientific terminology but the scientific outlook. It is not so much the language as the philosophy that the poet assimilates. No contemporary poet can hope to escape this influence, just as no writer can remain untouched by the culture of his time.

Unfortunately it is dangerous to import ideas into poetry. That is to profane the holy of holies, confusing art with magic. The purpose of art is to arouse emotions which are then transferred to the concerns of practical life. This is a type of aesthetic theory, re-emerging today, which insists that the power of the artist can be effectively brought into play only when the subject is worthy of his power. It has been attacked by R. G. Collingwood, in *The Principles of Art,* as a false and barbarous conception which exalts art as propaganda above artistic freedom.

More challenging is the attack contained in A. C. Bradley's famous inaugural lecture, "Poetry for Poetry's Sake," which argues eloquently that a poem is nothing more than a group of words on paper, a complex of sounds, thoughts, and emotions. Those who believe in poetry for poetry's sake argue first, that poetry is its own excuse for being, that it possesses an intrinsic value, and second, that its "poetic value" is to be found in this intrinsic worth alone, and nowhere else. Poetry must be judged in and for itself. For its nature, declares A. C. Bradley, "is to be not a part, nor yet a copy, of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase), but to be a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous. . . ."

All this is of crucial importance in its bearing on the central problem: the relationship of poetry to science. For if poetry is cut off from its organic connection with life, if its aim is not even to copy life, if it dwells in a realm that is beyond space and time, then obviously the subject has no part in determining the value of the poem, and science is rudely thrust out into the cold. Pure poetry stands justified as the perfect union of form and content. It is therefore impossible to translate the meaning of a poem in any but its own words.

Long before the critics formulated this congenial doctrine of poetry for poetry's sake, the poets themselves had been struggling with the problem. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the English Symbolists had fought against the intrusion of alien philosophic reflections into poetry. Poetry, they argued, must be "pure," and purity could be achieved only by eliminating from the body poetic such themes as were proper to science or sociology. Poetry should not argue. It should not state. Primarily a matter of artistic technique, poetry existed for its own sake and not for some ulterior end. But these poets went further in explicitly recognizing the common enemy, namely, science, and in mobilizing their forces against it.

William Butler Yeats, one of the important figures of his time, was drawn irresistibly to the folklore of the Irish peasantry as a fertile source of poetic material. Nurtured on such imaginative fare, he had no need of science and throughout his life remained not only unaffected by it but hostile to its influence, which seemed to him truly diabolical. Compacted of pure imagination, poetry, lyrical poetry, was a species of faery enchantment, a mystical revelation. This is the aesthetics of "pure" poetry, which appeals to the emotions and the imagination, not to the understanding. Small wonder that Yeats admonished his readers not to seek learning from the astronomers, on the ground that "dead is all their human truth."

Thus not only the truth of science but reality as such is extruded as immaterial from the kingdom of poetry. Like Baudelaire, the poet, not satisfied with the reality around him, cultivates experiences of supernal ecstasy so that the rational order of the universe may be broken and transcended. Like Baudelaire, he comes to believe that poetry can give him the power to free himself from the logically controlled world of perceptions. Thus he is capable of revealing not what is seen and known but what nobody else is capable of beholding: the depths of the unknown, the glimpses of the supernatural.

Unfortunately, the materials of his art refuse to conform

to the poet's desire for perfect purity; they remain refractory, intractably impure. The words he uses are charged with hosts of socialized meaning. The effort to strip poetry of ideas, logical meaning, and beliefs, is bound to fail, and if it does, then the problem of the truth-function of poetry must be faced. If poetry bore no relation to life, it would not have been cherished through the ages; we read poetry because we believe it does increase our understanding of life. By ordering and interpreting experience, poetry constitutes a criticism of life in the highest sense of the term.

If poetry served a truth-function, then it is possible for science to play a significant role in its growth and development. Not that the poet makes capital out of the commonplaces of scientific discovery: stimulus-response, behaviorism, electronics, the unconscious. What matters profoundly is the poet's liberated insight into the nature of man, his new and increased understanding of the world. If the modern personality has become four-dimensional, elusive in its contours, multiple, bafflingly complex, it is due in large measure to the experiments of many psychologists of all kinds. The horizons of consciousness were enlarged, and the writers by their own explorations confirmed, sometimes even anticipated, the discoveries of psychologists.

If we concede that poetry is a form of knowledge and not a kind of magic, then we are faced with the task of deciding how this knowledge compares with and how it differs from scientific knowledge. It can no longer be assumed that poetry, unlike science which generalizes and abstracts, gives us the realness of reality. No, poetry furnishes a criticism of life in that it imposes an emotionalized pattern on reality. Poetry and science are both necessary for the integration of experience. The two should not be permitted to work in antagonism or in isolation. Science is not a performer of miracles; a thorough knowledge of it will not guarantee that the poet will write with greater imagination and skill; it will not make him a poet. But given a powerful creative impulse together with

indubitable talent, there is no question but that a critical knowledge of scientific thought can help to make the poet's understanding of the world and of himself more extensive, more reliable, and more penetrating. Life will still be full of conflicts and contradictions and these will necessarily be reflected in his work, but if he begins with science he will be spared the necessity of believing that he is somehow the inspired oracle of the absolute.

Unlike the scientific investigator, he will not depend on experimental research, for his subject matter is not, strictly speaking, factual but interpretative. His imagination must still aid him in his work, but his apprenticeship to the scientific discipline will teach him the virtue of rational insight and understanding, of maintaining a more fruitful contact with the world of experience. Once he perceives that science is not a foe of the creative mind, he will come to recognize that science, like poetry, like all the arts, is a quest for truth, an adventure of the spirit of man. There is no phase of life that has not been transformed by science, and poetry, whatever new directions it may take, must come to terms with it. Whether the poet consciously acknowledges its influence, ignores it, or resists it, he is still shaped by its concepts, its experimental knowledge and conclusions. He may pretend that it offers no knowledge which he can use in his work; actually the language he employs, though it is culturally retarded, is colored by theories which stem from scientific discoveries. When, for example, he discusses human nature, he is advancing generalizations which fall within the scope of scientific inquiry.

This does not mean that he must consult the scientific almanac before he can set pen to paper. The subjective life, the immediate qualities of human experience, the nature of love and grief and longing and aspiration, these are "true," regardless of what science has to say. There are many problems which still lie outside the scope of science. But to deny that man, though human, is still a part of nature, is to subject him to a false dualism. Not that science removes all contra-

dictions. Whenever we talk about man, however, we are inevitably committed to some philosophy of human nature, and such a philosophy had better be rooted in tested, empirical knowledge than in mystical conjecture or blind faith.

In short, poetry begins where science leaves off. Poetry can humanize, make concrete and vivid the findings of science. Both poet and scientist are engaged in interpreting reality. The empirical truths of science must be given their aesthetic equivalents before they can be taken up by the consciousness of man. Poetry can do this effectively because it appeals directly to the emotion; it deals with the particular, the sensuous, not the general; the immediate, not the abstract; it reveals ideas in action, ideals incarnate. It embodies attitudes and by so doing satisfies the emotional needs of man.

Those who maintain that science and poetry are opposed in aim and content forget that poetry has been written which was based on the best available scientific knowledge of the time. Such poetry has often been didactic rather than lyrical, but there have been productions of this kind informed with profound feeling and imaginative power. The notion that exact knowledge is the foe of the creative spirit needs to be decisively refuted. Why assume that poetry flourishes best in dark places, that it is the spontaneous product of a primitive, untutored imagination, that the diffusion of scientific knowledge spells the death of poetry? Such fantastic theories, the fruit of unhistorical speculation, were propagated by Peacock and Macaulay. We have the example of Lucretius, a first-class poet, who in his *De Rerum Natura,* interprets the teachings of Epicurus, composing some truly powerful passages. His vigorous exposition of the scientific and philosophic beliefs of his age gives the poem its unity and its commanding interest.

Many centuries later, Thomas Hardy, in composing *The Dynasts,* afforded a striking example of a poet whose point of view, influenced by the philosophy of scientific determinism, dominated the structure of an epic drama. A pessimistic determinist, Hardy beholds life on earth as moulded by forces

that are blindly mechanical. The part which discloses the crucial difference between his poetry and that of his forebears is shown in his discussion of the monistic theory of the universe and the influence this is bound to have on his poetic practice. "The wide acceptance of the Monistic theory of the Universe forbade, in this twentieth century, the importation of Divine personages from any antique Mythology as ready-made sources or channels of Causation, even in verse, and excluded the celestial machinery of, say *Paradise Lost,* as peremptorily as that of the *Iliad* or the *Eddas.* And the abandonment of the masculine pronoun in allusion to the First or Fundamental Energy seemed a necessary and logical consequence of the long abandonment by thinkers of the anthropomorphic conception of the same."

This marks a revolution in the art of poetry. It is not here a question of the truth or falsity of the monistic theory of the universe but rather of a radically changed climate of opinion. God is dead; in His place we find the First or Fundamental Energy. Here is the explicit formulation of an aesthetic which excludes God completely from the category of causation. In short, those poets who have embraced the philosophy of science must reject the mythological or theological interpretation of events, natural or human. The test case in which this revolutionary transformation appears is in the substitution of neuter for masculine pronouns when referring to the First Cause.

Hardy has steeped himself in Comte's *Positive Philosophy,* but as a disciple of Schopenhauer he was constantly impressed by the element of automatism in human affairs. This over the main characters and events in *The Dynasts* broods the Immanent Will, unalterable, blind and deaf to the prayers of men, for it is itself held fast to the wheel. It is this steadfast awareness of the working of Necessity which distinguishes Hardy's poetry and gives it its characteristic stamp. The Immanent Will, though its purpose is sunk in unknowingness, determines everything that may befall. Everything has been

decided immutably. It is illogical, therefore, to cast any blame.

Thomas Hardy thus offers a signal test case of the validity of scientific knowledge as applied to poetry. Modern poets like W. H. Auden may have a more thorough grasp of scientific principles, but there has been no one who was more completely swept away by the ideological currents of his age. For Hardy the new scientific outlook constituted an open sesame; it was both philosophy and method; knowledge and truth. It was not something to be absorbed and then forgotten when he sat down to write. It was a universal philosophy applicable to all of life. Here was the central principle that would unify his poetry: a vision of life that transcended the limits of the human, the temporal, the finite. It was not a philosophy meant for consolation, but it was the truth as he saw it, and he used it conscientiously as a standard by which to judge human actions and aspirations. The first step towards naturalistic emancipation lay in eliminating the teleological error, a pernicious source of illusion. This metaphysics of purpose was smuggled in by a mind that felt orphaned and lonely in the face of absolute flux. Some meaning, some goal, there must be, otherwise life is unbearable. Therefore God is real. Hardy punctured this bubble.

As soon as the poet begins to reflect on the human situation—and how can consciousness be divorced from feeling?—he is bound to be influenced in some measure by the scientific outlook, for it is part of the cultural atmosphere he breathes. As a poet he cannot help thinking. He not only cries out in joy or pain; he also strives to understand the nature of his predicament on earth, the meaning of life, and this demands an interpretation that is more coherent than a purely emotional response—if that were possible. If contemporary man beholds the universe through the spectrum of science, the reason is that science has become an integral part of his cultural environment, organic to his way of thought. Even when he rejects science, he is testifying to its mighty power. Poetry is an intellectual thing.

Tradition, however, is a great force, and there are still poets who write in the traditional vein on traditional themes. Why this much ado about science? Had not the mightiest poets of the past, Shakespeare and Milton, written without benefit of the scientific discipline? (Actually, this is not so. Shakespeare and Milton saw the world through a perspective of beliefs that were current in their time. Science is not a brand-new creation; it is the best experimental knowledge available to a given generation.) But the modern poet lives in a science-conditioned world, his mind now has to function in the frame of reference it provides; his interpretation of Nature and of Man is shaped ineluctably by its concepts and conclusions.

Modern poets do not stand upon ceremony in utilizing scientific material that is helpful in their work. If psychoanalysis has made discoveries which highlight the dim recesses of human nature, explaining its contradictory impulses, its complex pattern of action, they will levy tribute upon it, and they will do so as a matter of course. They simply go ahead like a driver on a dark road at night, impatient to get home, but held to a slow pace by the swirling mist; suddenly he finds the moonlight break through, revealing a long clear stretch of road so that he steps on the accelerator and puts on extra speed. The poet's primary problem is that of conversion: to translate the theories and facts of science into terms congenial to his art. The knowledge must be assimilated into beliefs, emotions, ways of behavior and organic response. There have been some notable failures in the task of assimilation, but it is equally important to observe that the process goes on triumphantly. A war can be won even if a number of battles are lost.

Knowledge of science, it must be repeated, will not make a poet. What we are concerned with chiefly is how the poet interprets his world, what meanings he stresses, what faith animates him. Here the scientific discipline plays a pivotal role. For science can only tell us how phenomena take place and how these are interconnected by general laws; it offers

no interpretation of their worth to man, no clue as to why they happen as they do. A neutral universe must be humanized, and that is specifically the function of the poet who has accepted the philosophy of scientific humanism. Every utterance implies not only an assertion of meaning but also an act of faith that the meaning is true. No poet could long go on writing if he did not feel that his revelation or report of experience is as true as he can make it.

Poets in particular, suffering from a traditional prejudice against science, imagine that all sorts of disastrous consequences will follow if they accept its version of the truth. Science, far from curbing the imagination or enslaving the intellect, is actually a source of strength, a road to freedom. Whatever brings man closer to the truth is "good" for his art. It is the myth-seeker who nourishes the fiction that poetry expresses a transcendental truth superior to history or science. The advantage that the scientifically enlightened poet has over the mystic is that his feet are planted in reality. Science has given him not a mass of specialized facts nor a specialized vocabulary. What it has given him is a method of interpreting and understanding the world, a method of objective judgment.

Once the poet has assimilated the scientific culture of his age and trained himself to think scientifically, the question arises: Will he still be impelled to write? Will he still wish to be a poet? The question conceals the assumption, the bias, that the creative mind works best in a vacuum of dreams and fantasies, that myth is better than truth. The answer to such a question should be based on a review of the work of modern poets who have been profoundly influenced by the scientific outlook. Robinson Jeffers, Archibald MacLeish, Kenneth Fearing, Louis MacNeice, none of them is "innocent." Each has been infected in various ways by the scientific virus. What they do with their scientific knowledge, the quality of the poetry they produce, the philosophical conclusions they draw about life—these are question of a different order.

Has their work suffered as a consequence? Whatever

strength or weakness their poetry possesses, does not issue from their preoccupation with science. For the simple reason that science is not overtly present in their work. No poet writes about science or incorporates scientific theory directly into his work. What animates him is the scientific vision of the world.

Most of the smoke generated by the alleged conflict between poetry and science springs from a deep-seated misconception of the nature of science and what the point at issue is. Looking at the matter from the point of view of practitioners of a subtle and difficult art, the poets naturally tend to regard science as lying outside their scope of interest. How can the poet be expected to concern himself with conditioned reflexes, glandular secretions, space-time coordinates, hormones, vitamins, chromosomes, and what not? It is a sheer physical impossibility for him to master all these fields of specialized knowledge. What is more, this material is alien to his purpose and unsuited to his needs. The love of man for woman, awe before the majestic spectacle of the starry heavens, the loneliness of space and of the human soul, the protest of the conscience against cruelty or injustice, the fear of death — what have these universal themes of poetry to do with the discoveries of science?

The conflict, it must be pointed out, takes place on a different and higher plane. The battle is between two antagonistic world-views; the naturalistic and what may loosely be called the mystical or supernatural. If poets are attracted to transcendental doctrines, the reason is that these satisfy their craving for mystery, these confirm their intuition that there is much more in life than is summed up under the rubric of reason. For if there is a mystery that is beyond the comprehension of the scientist, then the poet becomes its prophetic interpreter. If he is not the voice of God, then he is the inspired vehicle of the unconscious. The French poet, Charles Péguy, asserted that he had no idea what he was going to set down at the moment of composition. Out of the secret places of his long silences were his lyrics born. Whatever word came

to him had to be set down because it had been dictated to him by the inner spirit.

So long as poets cling to such fantastic notions, there is no arguing with them. If they insist that their words have been dictated to them, then, of course, they are logical in demanding that every word, however seemingly irrelevant, be set down without alteration. Any touch of revision is a sacrilegious interference with the operations of the Holy Ghost. By the same logic poetry can indulge, as the Surrealists seriously maintain, in the fortuitous, the irrational; by subscribing to the cult of unintelligibility it can free itself from the burden of meaning.

Either the poet in his interpretation of life accepts the scientific outlook, or he rejects it wholly or in part. Neutral or indifferent he cannot remain. In either case the kind of poetry he writes will be different. This is not a deliberate, conscious process. Poetry is poetry and not science; but, since it derives its material from life itself, it cannot be divorced from the scientific synthesis, however far beyond it the poet may seek to go. In those areas of experience in which science can speak with some show of authority, the poet must abide by its findings. He cannot convince us, say, that disease is caused by sin or that numbers are endowed with magical properties or that the stars can influence human destiny. No genius can cover up such egregious blunders.

By accepting the scientific interpretation of life on earth, the poet does not render his creative problem any the less difficult; he has simply placed it within a new frame of reference. Science does not destroy ideals; it subjects them to drastic rational and empirical criticism. It does not work havoc with faith; it lays the foundation for a more secure and enduring faith. What it does do for the poet is to enlarge and sharpen his vision of the world, his understanding of man. Science works on the poet as poetry works on the mind of the reader—not directly but by indirection, by bathing the materials of consciousness in a new and more revealing light.

LINGUISTICS AND THE FUTURE

By
S. A. HAYAKAWA

'It is evident,' wrote Hume in his introduction to *A Treatise of Human Nature,* 'that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature; and that, however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another. Even Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion, are in some measure dependent upon the science of man; since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judged of by their powers and faculties. . . . Here, then, is the only expedient, from which we can hope for success in our philosophical researches: to leave the tedious lingering method which we have hitherto followed, and, instead of taking now and then a castle or village on the frontier, to march directly to the capital or center of these sciences—to human nature itself—which, being once masters of, we may everywhere else hope for an easy victory. . . . There is no question of importance whose decision is not comprised in the science of man; and there is none which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science. In pretending, therefore, to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a complete system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security.'

These are Hume's words, but they might almost serve today as both an introduction and a motto for the work now being attempted in general semantics.[1] For what the semanticist is trying to do is Hume's task over again, namely, that of formulating a science of sciences. Such a task has become, of

course, increasingly formidable since Hume's day; nevertheless, with the progressive specializing and atomizing of knowledge, the need for such an integration has become progressively more acute.

But to help us in such a task, we have two resources not available to Hume: first, we have a vast amount of new scientific knowledge, including such fundamental advances as the electrodynamics theory of matter, the non-Euclidean geometries, the relativity theory of Einstein, quantum mechanics, the chemistry of colloids, all of these completely overturning age-old categories and habits of speech; secondly, we have dramatic confirmation of the implications of the new sciences in our linguistic researches, which have established the fact that many of our so-called 'laws of thought' are merely laws of the structure of the Indo-European languages.[2] In such findings of science, Korzybski claims, we have the foundation of a new epoch in human history. The first stage of human development, from his point of view, is that of the savage, prelogical mentality, with a one-valued semantics (or system of evaluations), in which, as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl has said, 'everything is everything else' by 'mystic participation.'[3] The second stage is that on which European civilization has been based. There are sharp categories: 'This is this; that is that; this is not that'; the semantics are two-valued: a thing is either *A* or *not-A;* the use of powerful abstractions, such as 'space,' 'time,' 'matter,' 'causality,' appears with the development of vastly increased cerebral activity. This stage Korzybski calls 'Aristotelian.' We are, however, on the threshold, he says, of a third stage: the 'non-Aristotelian,' non-Euclidean, non-Newtonian stage. The complete revolution Einstein has produced in physics is only part of a general revolution that must eventually affect all human knowledge.[4]

In *Science and Sanity,* Korzybski offers us what he hopes is the handbook of this revolution. His system, which he calls 'general semantics,' is ambitious in content, far-reaching in its implications, yet its recommendations appear simple and prac-

tical. It involves at once a psychology, a unification of science, an educational method, and an ethics. As psychology, the distinctive feature of general semantics is that it regards the symbolic process as the basic differentiation between animal and human behavior. In accounting for human behavior it postulates the 'neuro-semantic environment'—the environment, that is, of dogmas, beliefs, creeds, knowledge, and superstitions to which we react as the result of our training—as a fundamental and inescapable part of our total environment. Mechanistic psychologies, as every humanist has complained, have, by ignoring or passing lightly over man's symbolic behavior, made overfacile analogies between men and animals, with the result that such behavior as is distinctively human was either neglected or crudely oversimplified. General semantics, as a psychology (or 'psycho-logics,' as Korzybski prefers to call it), by making man's symbolic processes and functioning the central object of study, claims to put the Prince of Denmark back into *Hamlet.*

As unification of science, general semantics explores such widely scattered fields as the comparative neurology of animals and human beings, the behavior of children and savages, the behavior of mathematicians and scientists in the manipulation of their symbols, and the behavior of the mentally ill, and seeks to evolve from such explorations general laws regarding the assumptions that underlie sane, adult, productive orientations and those that underlie un-sane, infantile, self-destructive orientations. The aristotelian orientations, Korzybski claims, based upon ancient epistemologies and antiquated theories of nature, inevitably lead under present conditions to 'blockages.' These blockages manifest themselves in personal life as fixations, complexes, and neuroses; in public discussion, debate, and even in scientific discourse as the objectification of abstract entities, which results in inquiry being halted, sometimes for decades, sometimes for centuries, while men struggle over non-sense questions. The new orientation is based on the discarding of 'elementalism,' or the verbal split-

ting of that which cannot be empirically separated: space *and* time, body *and* mind, intellect *and* emotions, etc. In discarding this 'elementalism,' we discard that now almost inevitable tendency constantly to treat parts as if they were independent of the whole, and to treat the whole as if it were the sum of its parts. The 'law of identity' (A is A) is also discarded as empirically false-to-fact. An 'infinite-valued orientation,' based on the 'logic of probability,' is substituted for the 'two-valued orientation,' based upon the 'logic' of Aristotle. These and other formulations, which revise the basic assumptions underlying our language, Korzybski regards as the principles upon which the most advanced researches of modern science are based. Training in general semantics, he claims, will make possible the application of our newer scientific attitudes to problems hitherto found extremely difficult or insoluble. Such application will free the still struggling social, political, and ethical sciences from the shackles provided for them by our primitive linguistic heritage.

As an educational theory and method of mental hygiene, general semantics uses the non-aristotelian principles as a theory of sanity, to be applied to check and correct the evaluations we make in everyday life. By destroying the delusional worlds that all of us, in some respects at least, inhabit as the result of our evaluational habits, we clear the way, Korzybski says, for new knowledge and new orientations. Despair, disillusionment, doubt, and frustration are, in most cases, the result of misevaluations, which in turn disclose our improper responses to symbols or symbol-situations. These improper responses Korzybski calls 'signal reactions'—that is, invariability of response such as we would have if a chimpanzee were taught to drive a car: it would step on the gas at a green light, even if another car were in its path. Similar invariabilities of reaction, both to linguistic and non-linguistic stimuli, he finds, are at the bottom of countless personal confusions as well as 'philosophical' dilemmas. So long as all of us are in some respects trained in animalistic response-systems, we cannot,

Korzybski says, drive in the complicated traffic-stream of modern life without producing the kind of murderous traffic jam we now have.

General semantics, formulated as a system of retraining, is offered as a means of recanalizing those responses (both to linguistic and non-linguistic stimuli) that cause morbid overexcitations of the nervous system: retraining in such a way as to bring automatically into play the higher centers of the brain. The healthy human reactions he terms 'symbol reactions.' Education in symbol reactions, whether applied to a patient in a consultant's office, to students in a classroom, or by an individual to himself, is bound, Korzybski claims, to have beneficial results, since it breaks those vicious circles, great or trivial, that drain our energies and arrest our development.

Finally, as ethics, general semantics bases itself on the fundamental characteristics of man by virtue of which he is human, namely, his ability to accumulate knowledge and experience from generation to generation, so that each individual lives his life dependent on the products of the nervous functioning of other individuals, most of them unknown to him and long since dead. This human characteristic, so familiar that we rarely even think about it, yet so obviously the central fact of our humanity, Korzybski terms our 'time-binding' capacity. In the act of naming man the 'time-binder,' he at once gives a functional, non-elementalistic description of man, and prescribes his ethics. Moral behavior, so far as Korzybski is concerned, is that which promotes time-binding: that which preserves the knowledge and wisdom of the past, tends to bring human beings into agreement for the co-operative solution of their problems, and adds to human knowledge for the benefit of future generations. But time-binding is accomplished through the use of symbols. Without the recognition of time-binding as the central fact underlying human accomplishment, we have paid too little attention, he says, to the symbolic process, and we have uncritically permitted its abuses and misuses to flourish. We have been defining man in non-functional

and elementalistic terms, either as an animal of somewhat superior kind, or as a fallen angel, with the result that we have unconsciously alternated between two absurdities, on the one hand imitating animals (usually the predatory ones), and, on the other hand, trying intermittently to behave like angels. With the recognition of time-binding, however, as the essential characteristic of human life, the study of the proper and improper, the sane and the unhealthy operation of the symbolic process—the study, that is, both of the normal functioning and the pathology of our neuro-linguistic, neuro-semantic reactions —provides the basis for an ethics that is at once demonstrable and practical.

This is neither the time nor the place to evaluate all the other work being done in semantics at the present time: by I. A. Richards and his followers in literary criticism, by P. W. Bridgman and Bertrand Russell, by Rudolf Carnap and C. W. Morris and the 'Unity of Science' group, by Jerome Frank, Thurman Arnold, and E. S. Robinson in law, and by many others in many other fields, except to say that all have made extremely valuable contributions, and that no one interested in the subject can afford to leave any of them unread. Korzybski's 'non-aristotelian system,' however, appears to be at once the most inclusive and the most usable of the syntheses yet produced. However difficult the demonstrations and proofs of the system to be found in *Science and Sanity*, the principles to which general semantics can be boiled down are simple, and can readily be taught to students or applied to one's own work. According to reports now being accumulated both by Korzybski and his co-workers, the effects of such retraining and application appear to be beneficial wherever tried: in psychiatry, as Dr. C. B. Congdon of the University of Chicago, Dr. D. G. Campbell of the University of California, and Dr. Hervey Cleckley of the University of Georgia have reported; in speech correction, as Dr. Wendell Johnson of the University of Iowa and Dr. Spencer F. Brown of the University of Minnesota have reported; in the study of reading diffi-

culties in elementary and secondary education; in the teaching of the sciences, in mental hygiene, and in many other fields, including, as I am able to report from my own experience, the teaching of English. Furthermore, mathematicians, psychiatrists, biologists, jurists, sociologists, philosophers, and artists have been provoked by Korzybski and the questions he has raised into new and exciting speculations.

In the face of this vast increase of interest on all sides in matters of language, students of linguistics are in a peculiarly favored position. Many of the commonplaces of linguistic science are also cornerstones of semantic thought. Linguistic students have long been familiar with the principle that no word ever has exactly the same meaning twice: that when by 'meaning' we refer to the relationship of an utterance to its total context, there is no such thing as identity. Comparative linguistics has offered us insights not often available to laymen into what is meant by 'the structure of language.' Phoneticians have familiarized us with the notion of the absolute uniqueness of events, as well as with the process by which the human nervous system unconsciously abstracts significant features from unique *continua* of noises.[5] In dealing with such terms as 'word,' 'science,' 'dialect,' 'the English language,' 'speech defect,' etc., we are constantly struggling against the objectification of fictional entities.[6] In the problem of defining the phoneme, we have been familiarized with the character of the abstractional fiction, and through such familiarity we have been inducted into crucial questions of scientific method.[7] Mentalistic 'causes' to which linguistic events have been attributed have been all but abolished by the rigorous empiricism of modern investigators of language.[8] Students of the psychology of language, dialect geographers, students of speech pathology, have all been advancing the principle, in one direction or another, that the study of linguistic phenomena must take into consideration the totality of their non-linguistic contexts. In short, scientific students of language already have, toward the subject-matter which they investigate, that aware-

ness of terminological pitfalls, that flexibility of evaluation, and that non-elementalism which general semantics regards as essential.

The student of language who studies general semantics will find himself convinced, I am sure, of two things, whatever may be the objections, corrections, or emendations he may wish to offer to the system. First, he will feel convinced that the study of language is a far more important subject than even he has ever ventured to claim. None of us, after all, would deny that symbolic behavior is central to all that we term human activity. Nor would we deny that patterns of behavior are determined to no inconsiderable degree by the language we happen to inherit.[9] Still less would we shrug off the whole matter by saying, 'If you improve people's thoughts, their language will take care of itself.' Secondly, the student of linguistics will find it difficult to escape the conclusion that *some* system of *general* semantics, with Korzybski or without, is necessary for the integration of our linguistic researches with other fields of human inquiry. Such conclusions will lead to profound reorientations in our work. Linguistics, purposefully redirected in such a way as to throw light on how man's linguistic machinery works and what it does, will tend to become less exclusively a study of the kinds of noises man makes, and more a study of what those noises stand for and result in.

Such a redirection of our studies ought, it appears to me, to be seriously considered. The investigation of the general laws governing the functioning and disorders of the symbolic process provides first of all a basis for the unification of disciplines in what are now apparently conflicting fields. For example, the teacher of English and the teacher of oratory and debate can find a common meeting ground in trying to inculcate in their students the habit of making meaningful statements, rather than glib or plausible statements. Furthermore, such investigations will provide a basis for the unification of graduate work in English, in which, as matters now stand, the

student too often feels either that the study of linguistics is an unnecessary intrusion on his literary interests, or that literature is an intrusion on his linguistic interests. Again, general semantic studies will go a long way toward bridging the sometimes considerable gap that now exists between our interests as research workers in language or literature and the interests of our undergraduate students. There are few linguistic facts, drawn from whatever obscure source, which cannot, when fitted into a general system of semantics, be used to throw light on the problems of interpretation and of expression that confront, for example, our students in freshman English. When the relationship between our linguistic habits and our social, political, and personal dilemmas is made clear, few students will be found to be so indifferent to their own fate in life as to ignore what we have to tell them.

Again, to the investigator of man's symbolic processes, literature, no less than science, becomes a doubly significant study. Semantics need not be, as some appear to believe, hostile to literature and poetry. On the contrary, it can find in the literary manipulation of symbols not only a wide range of special linguistic phenomena to be accounted for, but also a powerful means of affecting the reader's neuro-semantic reactions toward greater flexibility and greater sanity. From the point of view of the general semanticist, the problems of proper literary interpretation may be regarded as special cases of the larger problem of proper neuro-semantic evaluations. Training in literary criticism, therefore, can assume a far greater importance in general education than non-literary people have ever been willing to accord it. A general semantics should, consequently, in addition to awakening linguistic students to an increased sense of their importance and obligations, revitalize literary criticism.

I do not know if what Korzybski terms the 'non-Aristotelian orientation' is what is needed to solve the bitter paradoxes of modern civilization: the starvation in the midst of plenty, and the international misunderstandings that grow

bloodier and more destructive with each advance in our methods of communication. But the fact that humanity needs some kind of fundamental reorientation has never been more apparent than it is today. If Korzybski is right in maintaining that the correction of the disordered functioning of our symbolic process is a root problem in human affairs—and I believe he is—then we, as students both of language and of literature, have an important part to play in making possible the future emergence of a culture less barbarous than our own.

[1] *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics.* Second edition, with supplementary introduction and bibliography. By Alfred Korzybski. Lancaster, Pennsylvania: The Science Press Printing Company, 1941. lxxi, 798 pp.

[2] See, for example, Benjamin Lee Whorf, 'The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language,' in *Language, Culture, and Personality: Essays in Memory of Edward Sapir* (Menasha, Wisconsin: 1941).

[3] Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1926).

[4] See also Oliver L. Reiser, *The Promise of Scientific Humanism* (New York: Oskar Piest, 1940).

[5] See, for example, G. O. Russell, *The Vowel,* 1928, and *Speech and Voice,* 1931.

[6] Leonard Bloomfield, *Language,* 1933. On 'speech defects' see Wendell Johnson, *Language and Speech Hygiene,* 1939, chapter II.

[7] W. F. Twaddell, *On Defining the Phoneme,* Language Monograph, Linguistic Society of America, 1935.

[8] Bloomfield, *op. cit.;* see also *Linguistic Aspects of Science,* 1939.

[9] 'It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts oneself to reality without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. . . . We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.' Edward Sapir, 'The Status of Linguistics as a Science,' *Language,* 5: 207-14, 1929.

THE FUTURE OF POETRY

By

LOUISE POUND

Poetry is the most beautiful form of human speech. The human race has always had its song and always will have it. It may not be expected to die out. In our present century, however, its status has altered. There are relatively fewer hearers or readers of it than in the long stretches of the past and fewer noted poets. Professors offer courses in the great poetry of the world, and one hopes that they will continue to do so. Poetry societies exist on campuses in great numbers. Prizes are offered to encourage young poets and avenues of publication opened to them in local magazines. What has happened to poetry to bring its lapse from its old prestige? Various explanations have been brought forward by various critics; but I find myself agreeing with none of them. My own seems to be different still.

I

Among the explanations that I recall at random is that of a scholar who believes that the poetic decline of recent times is more or less bound up with the waning of humanistic studies, especially classical studies. A more conspicuous school of thought attributes the "epitaph of poetry" to the rise of science, finding the poetic and the scientific spirits incompatible, as the young Keats did when he proposed his famous toast, "Confusion to the memory of Sir Isaac Newton, who destroyed the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to a prism," or Poe when he wrote his sonnet "To Science." A world given over to scientific investigation, to invention and machines, a world devoted to the cult of the realistic in literature and of socio-

logical and political theory is not stimulating to poetic creativeness. This was not the view of Matthew Arnold, who thought that as science came to the foreground poetry would be needed more and more as an offset, would perhaps be relied upon to replace religion. And it was not the view of Tennyson, who loved to introduce scientific conceptions and illustrations into the fabric of his poetry.

Another thinker, a political conservative, ascribed the shift from poetry to our recent dominant concern for the proletarian. How well, he asked, do proletarianism and poetry mix? The proletarian spirit is no more likely, is even less likely, to inspire beautiful literature than is the spirit of science and the worship of the machine.

There is something to think about in two explanations made in 1937 by H. S. Canby in the *Saturday Review of Literature*.[1] Mr. Canby does not think the decay of poetry is for Carlyle's reason—that poetry belongs to the childhood of the race and inevitably declines with sophistication. Nor does he hold that we are losing as a people our sense of rhythm. We still dance and like music; indeed, is this not an age of swing-time? Nor is it because of the neglect of the reading and teaching of verse in the lower schools and the colleges. Mr. Canby suggested that poetry is suffering from that widespread specialization which has affected so many other activities — the division of labor, specialization in sport, in education, in manual training. Only the classicists read the classics, only scientists collect specimens, only linguists perfect themselves in foreign languages, only scholars form libraries. Only professionals have been expected to make music or paint. Do only poets read poetry? In a further comment Mr. Canby emphasizes the possible maladjustment between poetry and our own era. In a time of emotional confusion when we are in doubt of the stability of our own civilization, in such a time poetry can hardly be articulate for the general reader. It follows old emotional and thought patterns, expresses only those which have become conventions; it attracts no more than does good

prose. Good prose is not merely easier reading (it was not once), but it is better reading than poetry which is not real poetry but only acceptable verse.

To continue a brief sampling of contemporary views, in an article, "America and Poetry,"[2] also in the *Saturday Review of Literature,* Leonard Bacon implied that the thinner quality of American poetry after 1890 is in part the cause of present conditions. This falling-off in quality came, he thinks, from a wish to imitate European cultural ways, from too great concern for form and diction, so that an artificial, sissified performance was turned out, in which there was nothing for the general human being. The vogue of Imagism *et al.* followed and the present-day vogue of the unintelligible. These later vogues of poetry have to do with method and form; but method and form are not what is of first importance. And true pleasure, said Mr. Bacon, is a solitary performance, whereas the solitary in our contemporary life gives way to the noisy and the social, to group pleasure. The new psychologists think us abnormal if we take our pleasure by ourselves. One might add that many now go in for the "choral reading" of poetry, though it is really only the lone reader who reads it best. He points out further that poetry is a very human art, and it is its duty to be beautiful. But our age is afraid of the beautiful. Mr. Bacon is sure that this condition is not permanent. He is surer than I find myself to be that poetry will return to its old ascendance.

The obscurity and symbolism often affected by present-day poets also comes in for blame or for protest. Among those who believe that present tendencies contribute little to true poetry and limit the number of its readers is Elizabeth Drew. Too much allusiveness, the substitution of psychological process for logical structure and sequence, capricious use of widely divergent associations when, as so often, the central idea of the poem is stated nowhere in the poem—all this robs poetry of appeal. The cult of obscurity alienates readers. When poetry is not emotionally comprehensible except to the highly trained,

it cannot keep its hold on the public. It may be left, as Mr. Canby suggested, to specialists and to the library. Though our age is widely read, the sensitiveness, the subtle emotional responsiveness that poetry needs, is lacking. A sense of its universal values has faded.

These various diagnoses do not seem to me to be the whole story or even the main story. Surely there is a practical, realistic factor to be taken into account, though it may well have been overlooked by theorists and idealists.

II

First let us take a look at poetry in panorama, for the part it has played down the generations; this before we turn to the present to try to understand or predict. Whether or not we are as confident as are Mr. Bacon and many others who write on the subject that poetry has a bright future, it certainly has had a past, a long one that takes us backward down vast stretches of time to the beginning of the human race. For that matter linguists have suggested, especially Professor Otto Jespersen of Copenhagen, that the beginnings of language itself, the means of human intercommunication, may be found in musical utterance. All speech may once have been song; the two phenomena, speech and song, not yet differentiated; speech not yet evolved. Among aboriginal tribes today speech is more emotional, and melody counts for more than among us. Uncivilized utterance is highly musical. Whether it is true or not—and there are numerous other theories concerning the origin of language—it is a fascinating hypothesis that from the first outbursts of primitive music and song, i.e., from primitive poetry, comes our first human speech. When we pass to literary records, here also poetical language seems older than prose expression. The often-quoted eighteenth-century poet may have been right when he wrote:

> Thus nature drove us; warbling rose
> Man's voice in verse before he spoke in prose.

I have dwelt on the genesis of poetry, possibly coincident

with the genesis of language, to illustrate the remoteness of its past and its fundamental importance in the history of the race.

Next, in this brief retrospect, let us continue to glance at the panorama of poetry, its place and prestige, between ancient days and the present. Poetry, meant to be heard, was still the leading form of literary expression in Greek and Roman days, as in primitive times. The fundamentally oral quality of poetry must not be forgotten. Among the early Germans, professional bards were in the foreground. They were the preservers of tribal history. They chanted of the deeds of heroic ancestors and of heroic fights of their own times. Before the days of writing and manuscripts, this was the only way in which traditions could be handed on. Verse was more easily remembered than prose, and perhaps for this reason it seems to have earlier acquired clear and attractive structure. In Chaucer's time, the late Middle Ages, tales were still chanted to the accompaniment of some musical instrument or read aloud before a group of hearers. Poetry was still the dominant art form. It maintained its ascendance in the sixteenth century, a great poetic period, and it was still directed mainly to the ear. Drama was then in poetic form. Shakespeare composed his plays to be presented, to be heard, not for circulation in printed form. And nearly any character in a Shakespearean play may catch up a musical instrument and sing. Song seems to have had nearly universal popularity then. Though there was more reading and less hearing of it in the seventeenth century, it was still, two centuries after the introduction of printing, the form of literature that reached most persons, that attracted geniuses, the strong minds that craved readers and influence as well as self-expression. Poetry was still the form that brought prestige, and, for the dramatists, remuneration. The latter may not have been great; but other forms of literature hardly brought returns at all.

Thus we have come as far down as the eighteenth century and find poetry having a relative monopoly, less than it had

earlier, but still unmistakably in the foreground. The outpourings of verse have been the key not only to the emotional but to the intellectual tendencies, the moral development, the psychic outlook of people, down nearly to our own time—poetry far more than prose. The significant period for shift was the eighteenth century. By this time the middle class had risen in influence. The reading public was enlarged and reading popularized. Not only the upper classes read, but the rising currency of newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals, and printed street ballads brought reading to those farther down in social station. Of especial importance in this century was the advent of the periodical essay in prose and of prose fiction, native English forms. The vogue of these new forms, the essay and the novel, attracted strong writers. We wait, however, until the early nineteenth century and Sir Walter Scott and his invention of the historical novel, for the appearance of works like his *Ivanhoe, Kenilworth, The Talisman,* for fiction reading to become thoroughly respectable. This seems to me to be the historic turning-point in the position of poetry. I want to emphasize this. It was Sir Walter Scott who really broke the monopoly of poetry, who ultimately wrote away its popularity when he turned from the verse romance to fiction. More than anyone else he has the historic position of the author who diminished its sales and so helped to dislodge it from its ascendance.

Literary anthologies give first place to poetry through the nineteenth century. Those of the twentieth century give more and more space relatively to prose. The impetus of centuries carried verse fairly well through the Victorian period; but by that time its dominance was clearly waning. It was losing to the multifarious prose that had developed so slowly as a competitor. It has lost ground to the novel, the essay, to histories like those of Carlyle and Macaulay, written under the influence of Scott. Serious stage plays were composed in prose. And now we must take into account, too, the sketches and biographies and autobiographies and travel-books and the miscellaneous political and sociological matter that our presses pour

forth in floods. The Victorian poets were the last to have great place, and even their poetry, in the perspective of the present, seems to shrink somewhat in depth and significance when placed beside the creations of the trail-blazing minds that composed *Oliver Twist, Vanity Fair, The Mill on the Floss, The Egoist, The Return of the Native,* in England, and, on the Continent, *Ghosts, The Doll's House, Le Débâcle, Die Weber, Resurrection.* The profounder and truer vein in the last half of the century ran, not through its poetry as in the earlier half, but through its prose.

Authors with much to say and on deep problems chose at long last the medium of prose expression. They wanted many readers. There is no decline in the supply of poems; but fewer persons turn to them for what they read. Poetry societies and small poetical publications multiply. Poetry holds its academic standing. Teachers bring up their pupils on it, as they should, for it is an appealing form of verbal expression. It is, as we have seen, a fundamental form in literary history. But so far as demand for its production goes it is moribund. "Everybody knows that poetry is a dying art," wrote one publisher. "Everybody in the book and literary business, that is. The news has not yet spread to the masses." It is only newspaper poets, such as the late Walt Mason or Edgar Guest, or columnists trying it for variety's sake, or writers of light verse for periodicals, that command much of a market. Or perhaps the chief market at present is that of those who produce the incredible stanzas crooned by radio performers, in which there are two staple characters, the moonstruck singer and his or her no less moonstruck "honey," both moaners. But this is not poetry, though it may command payment. It is not even verse.

I remember once writing a sophomoric piece that I entitled "The Literary Interregnum," in which I tried to point out that there are usually "between periods," or periods of transition, in which the literary product is weak and uncertain. Old themes and patterns are dying and the new is not yet born. My reference was mainly to poetry. The nineteenth-century poets

had passed and their successors had not yet come to the foreground. But I felt pretty sure of the future and of my word "interregnum." I was sure that it would end and that new literary kings would be crowned. They will be, of course, but they seem more likely to be kings of prose than kings of verse. Are we to have in our century the major poets to whom Whitman so looked forward?

> Poets to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!
> Not today is to justify me and answer what I am for,
> But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater
> than before known
> Arouse, for you must justify me.

In the past, disastrous war periods have often proved greatly stimulating to poets and have been followed by notable poetic performance. In our present war period there may seem to be a distinct popular turning to poetry. Some have thought that there is. But how likely is the product to be greater or more lasting than that hailed as significant during the first World War?

III

What I wish to suggest as the major reason for the lesser role played by poetry in our day is the economic reason, the lack of rewards, the weakening of the old motives for turning to it, the undermining effect of competition. Disconcerting as this may seem, the practical or economic motive is a fundamental thing, to be taken into account in literary history as elsewhere in our world of human beings. It is recognition of this motive that has made me lose much of my former faith in an "interregnum" to be followed by a new glorious florescence time for poetry. In any line of human activity the practical side is important. Economic explanations underlie many if not most of the significant phenomena of human history. Whether we are dealing with politics, intellectual activities, even religion, such phenomena have in part an economic basis; economic considerations are of fundamental importance for

their future. This is not to be overemphasized, of course, but the economic factor holds for art, too. Economic conditions must be favorable if there is to be high development. Indeed unidealistic as this may seem, it is the vogues they foster that make possible high development. They, combined with the right element in time. Shakespeare could have been the dramatist he was only at the time when he wrote. Fifty years before the drama had not yet developed nor the possibilities of blank verse. Not long after his death the Puritans closed the theaters, and no plays were presented. Milton, too, would not have written on the themes he chose, nor in the poetical modes in which he so excelled, had he written a few decades later, when Renaissance poetic ideas had been superseded by newer and more prosaic ones.

We have seen how, for so long a time, poetry had a relative monopoly in the literary field. And we have seen, too, whether we like to confront the fact or not, how it is affected by economic returns. Why do geniuses write? What impels them? They hope for fame, prestige, and for concrete reward for attaining it; or they have certain aims to achieve, to set forth their ideas, or they crave self-expression. That self-expression usually takes the literary form that finds most readers or brings surest rewards. We turn our endeavors into the lines that bring these, or we are never heard from. A potential super-football player born, living, and dying in Alaska could hardly attain All-American recognition. Nor a potential great writer growing up and remaining in a region where there is little culture and books are not encouraged. Men's wish to better themselves and to achieve security is the surest impetus to effort. When Shakespeare wrote, the poetic drama was the only form of literature that brought economic returns. He was a good businessman, too, and his acting and playwriting brought him economic prosperity. Had Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, or Thackeray had private incomes, they would probably never have written much, or, in any case, not written what they did. When they wrote, they turned their compositions into the

forms having vogue and claiming readers. When novels rose to popularity, when it was they that brought fame and money and commanded most readers, strong minds began to turn to them and to cease composing lyrics and verse romances and verse dramas. And of late years the demand for magazine literature still directs activity into the kaleidoscopically varied though sometimes slight forms that these magazines endeavor to supply. My idea is, then, that poetry lost place as it had the competition of attractive prose, the latter bringing greater rewards. In a recent article Professor George R. Stewart dates the decline of poetry in quality after 1890 and points to its complete surrender to the novel since 1920. I go further back by more than a hundred years for the beginnings of the shift.

And now poetry has other competitors to lure the strongest talent and tempt the ambitious. The new forms of art—the films and the radio—are forms for which the texts are perishable, as merely oral literature always is; and the fame they yield is transient. Yet they are formidable rivals and their economic returns unmistakable. Authors of both fiction and drama now often direct their works toward recognition in these fields. What chance has poetry in competition with them? They reach millions where printed volumes of verse reach fewer and fewer. Why, then, writers may well say, bother with verse? Instead of the lasting utterances of great poets, addressed to readers of intelligence, typical in our day is the flat matter so often blatted out by the mooncalf singers of the radio. Curiously, our sophisticated twentieth century tolerates rhymed or semirhymed verse that could not be paralleled in preceding centuries. In the 1890's people used to think "After the Ball" or "Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl" pretty weak stuff; but these pieces were lengths ahead, in thought, content, narrative, and expression, of various lyrics now turned out. I refer to matter like "Mamie, O Mamie, don't you feel ashamy?" "There ain't no maybe in my baby's eyes," "O how I love Dolores. Does she love me? Of cou-rse." Sometimes there are genuine poetic successes, like Archibald MacLeish's

"The Fall of the City" and Maxwell Anderson's poetical dramas. Radio drama in verse may be the beginning of something, a significant pioneer venture that restores somewhat of its old role, appeal to the ear, to the poet. But, after all, such drama can reach only the special not the general, in any case not the "proletarian," audiences of these days.

I know I have not drawn a roseate picture. I hope it is an untrue one. "If we lose poetry from ordinary life," wrote a critic, "we lose the dignity and power of the word, the moving eloquence of its cadences, the exaltation of language and emotion which transcend our daily realities and lift us into a higher world of the spirit." When verse comes to be used for fewer and more special purposes, when it comes to serve academic purposes mainly, it falls into relative disuse.

As I said at the opening, poetry is the most beautiful form of human speech. That it will not die out I am sure. The language has rich potentialities. People will always wish to put words together musically, to give pleasure to themselves or their hearers, or merely to explore the possibilities of the language. Poetry surely has a future, both for the expression of ideas and emotions and for musical appeal. The teacher knows that there is no better mental discipline for the young reader than to go through it understandingly. To read in the true sense one needs to learn to read poetry, real poetry, not fair verse. For that matter, the most attractive prose has never been written by those who cannot appreciate poetry. I believe that poetry will be composed and read and loved as long as the race lasts; that there will always be poets and lovers of poetry. But it can hardly regain its old monopoly, attracting to it the best authorship down the generations. It has too great competition—that is the chief difficulty it encounters. It has the competition of an interesting and multifarious prose, late in development in literary history, and now it has the competition of two new and extremely popular forms of art. Possibly, too, there will be other new forms that we do not now dream of, just as the Victorians never dreamed of our sound

films or of our revival of purely oral literature over the radio. There need be no pessimism regarding the future of verse. The select will always delight in fine poetry and the masses will always cherish their favorite pieces. One expects from time to time a genuine "renaissance" of poetic interest and productivity. I repeat that poetry will always be with us, but I do not see how it can have again the literary monopoly, the supreme prestige, that it once had.

[1] H. S. Canby: "The Present State of Poetry," May 1, 1937, p. 8 (editorial).

[2] Leonard Bacon: "Americans and Poetry," *Sat. Review,* Oct. 7, 1939. Vol. XX, pp. 3-4.

THE REVOLT AGAINST POSITIVISM IN RECENT EUROPEAN LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP

By

RENÉ WELLEK

In Europe, especially since the First World War, there has been a revolt against the methods of literary study as practiced in the second half of the nineteenth century: against the mere accumulation of unrelated facts, and against the whole underlying assumption that literature should be explained by the methods of the natural sciences, by causality, by such external determining forces as are formulated in Taine's famous slogan of *race, milieu, moment.* In Europe, this nineteenth century scholarship is generally called "positivism": a convenient label which is, however, somewhat misleading, as by no means all older scholars were positivists in the sense of actually believing in the teachings of Comte and Spencer. If we analyze the state of scholarship at the beginning of the twentieth century, we recognize that the recent reaction is directed against three or four fairly distinct traits of traditional literary studies. There is, first, petty antiquarianism: "research" into the minutest details of the lives and quarrels of authors, parallel-hunting, and source-digging — in short, the accumulation of isolated facts, usually defended on the vague belief that all these bricks will sometime be used in a great pyramid of learning. It is this characteristic of traditional scholarship that has elicited most derisive criticism, but it is in itself a harmless and even useful human activity which dates back at least as far as the Alexandrian scholars and the medieval monks. There will always be pedants and antiquaries; and their services, properly sifted, will always be needed. However, a false and pernicious "historicism" is frequently connected with this

"factualism": the view that no theory or no criteria are needed in the study of the past and the view that the present age is unworthy of study or is inaccessible to study by scholarly methods. Such an exclusive "historicism" has justified a refusal even to analyze and criticize literature. It has led to a complete resignation in face of all aesthetic problems, to extreme skepticism, and hence to an anarchy of values. The alternative to this historical antiquarianism was late nineteenth century aestheticism: it stresses the individual experience of the work of art, which is, without doubt, the presupposition of all fruitful literary study, but which in itself can lead only to complete subjectivism. It cannot bring about such a formulation of a systematic body of knowledge as will, necessarily, always remain the aim of literary scholarship. This aim was sought after by nineteenth century scientism, by the many attempts to transfer the methods of natural science to the study of literature. This was the intellectually most coherent and respectable movement in nineteenth century scholarship. But also here we have to distinguish several motives: one was the attempt to emulate the general scientific ideals of objectivity, impersonality, and certainty—an attempt, on the whole, supporting pre-scientific factualism. Then there was the effort to imitate the methods of natural science by a study of causal antecedents and origins which, in practice, justified the tracing of any kind of relationship as long as it was possible on chronological grounds. Applied more rigidly, scientific causality was used to explain literary phenomena by determining causes in economic, social, and political conditions. Other scholars tried even to introduce the quantitative methods of science: statistics, charts, and graphs. And finally there was a most ambitious group which made a large-scale attempt to use biological concepts in the tracing of the evolution of literature. Ferdinand Brunetière and John Addington Symonds conceived of the evolution of genres on the analogue of biological species. Thus students of literature became scientists, or rather would-be scientists. As they were late in the field and handled an in-

tractable material, they were usually bad or second-rate scientists who felt apologetic about their subject and only vaguely hopeful about their methods of approach. This is certainly a somewhat over-simplified characterization of the situation of literary scholarship around 1900; but I dare say we all recognize its survivals today, in America and elsewhere.

In Europe, the revolt against this positivism was variously instigated. Something must have been due to the general change in the philosophical atmosphere: the old naturalism was thrust into the background in most countries when Bergson in France, Croce in Italy, and a host of men in Germany (and to a lesser extent in England) overthrew the dominance of the old positivistic philosophies in favor of a wide variety of idealistic or at least boldly speculative systems like, to name English examples, those of Samuel Alexander and A. N. Whitehead. Especially in Germany, psychology overcame the old sensationalism and associationism by such new concepts as the *Gestalt* or *Struktur*. The natural sciences also underwent a profound transformation which it would be difficult to summarize briefly but which meant a loss of the old certainty about preconceptions on matter, the laws of nature, causality, and determinism. The fine arts themselves and the art of literature reacted against realism and naturalism in the direction of symbolism and other "modernisms" whose victory must, however slowly or indirectly, have influenced the tone and attitude of scholarship.

But, most importantly, a group of philosophers offered a positive defence of the methods of the historical sciences, which they contrasted sharply with the methods of the physical sciences. I can do little more than indicate some of their solutions, since a detailed discussion would involve such intricate questions as the classification of the sciences and the nature of scientific method. In Germany, as early as 1883, Wilhelm Dilthey[1] worked out the distinction between the methods of natural science and those of history in terms of a contrast between causal explanation and comprehension. The scientist,

Dilthey argued, explains an event by its causal antecedents, while the historian tries to understand its meaning in terms of signs or symbols. The process of understanding is thus necessarily individual and even subjective. A year later, Wilhelm Windelband,[2] the well-known historian of philosophy, attacked the view that the historical sciences should imitate the methods of the natural sciences. The natural scientists, he argued, aim to establish general laws, while the historians try rather to grasp the unique and non-recurring fact. Windelband's view was elaborated and somewhat modified by Heinrich Rickert,[3] who drew the line not so much between generalizing and individualizing methods, as between the sciences of nature and the sciences of culture. The moral sciences, he argued, are interested in the concrete and individual. Individuals, however, can be discovered and comprehended only in reference to some scheme of values, which is merely another name for culture. In France, A. D. Xénopol[4] distinguished between the natural sciences as preoccupied with the "facts of repetition" and history preoccupied with the "facts of succession." Finally in Italy, Benedetto Croce[5] made even more sweeping claims for the method of history. All history is to him contemporaneous, an act of the spirit, knowable because created by man and hence known far more certainly than the facts of nature. There are many other theories of this type which have one feature in common: they all make a declaration of independence for history and the moral sciences against their subjection to the methods of the natural sciences. They all show that these disciplines have their own methods or could have their own methods just as systematic and rigorous as those of the natural sciences. But their aim is different, and their method is distinct; and thus there is no need to ape and envy the natural sciences. All these theories also agree in refusing to accept an easy solution which many scientists and even scholars in the humanities seem to favor. They refuse to admit that history or the study of literature is simply an art, namely, a non-intellectual, non-conceptual enterprise of free

creation. Historical as well as literary scholarship, though not natural science, is a system of organized knowledge with its own methods and aims, not a collection of creative acts or records of merely individual impressions.

Let us now glance at the different countries of Europe to see how far their reaction have gone in each case and what alternatives have been proposed to the methods of nineteenth century literary scholarship. Some countries I shall ignore out of sheer ignorance or pass over lightly; but, in spite of these limitations, something like a spiritual map of Europe should emerge if literary scholarship is at all an indication of the general intellectual situation of a country.

I shall begin with France since France seems to me the country least affected by this revolt. The reasons for this possibly surprising French conservatism are not far to seek. France was never overwhelmed by the invasion of organized German literary factualism; and her literary historians, however naturalistic in their aims, preserved an admirable aesthetic and critical sense. Ferdinand Brunetière, though deeply influenced by biological evolutionism, managed to remain a classicist and a Catholic; and Gustave Lanson combined a scientific ideal with conceptions of a national soul and its spiritual aspirations. Factualism most nearly triumphed in France just after the First World War: the heavily documented *thèse;* the wide ramifications of a well-organized school of comparative literature, inspired by Fernand Baldensperger; the successes of scholars who furnished extremely elaborate editions of French classics;[6] the theories of Daniel Mornet, who demanded an "integral" literary history of the minor and even minimal authors:—all these are symptoms that France rather tried to catch up with the purely historical scholarship of the nineteenth century. But also in France there are signs of a change which tends, as everywhere, in two directions: towards a new synthesis and a new analysis. French literary historians excelled especially in boldly sketched intellectual histories. For instance, Paul Hazard's *Crise de la Conscience Européenne*[7] is a skilful ex-

position of the change which came over Europe at the end of the seventeenth century, and Hazard works with the conception of a European mind incomprehensible to the old positivistic methods. Naturalism was also thrown to the winds in the studies by professed Catholics such as Étienne Gilson[8] of the effects of scholasticism on literature or by Abbé Bremond[9] in his voluminous *Literary History of the Religious Sentiment in France.* In more narrowly literary studies, Louis Cazamian[10] has even tried to construct a speculative scheme of a psychological evolution of the history of English literature conceived as a series of increasingly speedy oscillations of the English national mind between the poles of sentiment and intellect. Whatever we may think of the success of the scheme in its particular application (and I for one feel that it does violence to the complex reality of literary changes), here was at least an attempt at an almost metaphysical philosophy of history applied to literature. Paul Van Tieghem[11] has promoted the conception of "general literature," opposed to the isolated and isolating study of influences as practiced by the comparatists: a concept which assumes the unity of the Western European literary tradition. His own practice is, however, disappointingly conventional, since he merely traces literary fashions such as Ossianism through all European countries. Also in more purely analytical studies of literature I know of little evidence of a complete reorientation. The method of *explication de textes* (which must be welcomed as an early progenitor of the wholesome back-to-the-text movement in recent literary studies) is too narrowly philological and exegetical to be more than a useful device of literary pedagogy.

Things look very different in Italy. There the influence of an idealist philosopher who himself is a distinguished historian and literary critic has transformed literary studies. Benedetto Croce[12] has written frequently on questions of literary scholarship since his first booklet on literary criticism in 1894 and has consistently argued against the mechanical and uncritical practices of the routine scholarship of his time. He has

revived interest in Francesco de Sanctis, the Hegelian historian of Italian literature. He has sharply focussed attention on the aesthetic and theoretical problems of literature without losing a very intense sense of the past. He has himself contributed notably to literary criticism with studies of Dante, Ariosto, Shakespeare, Corneille, Goethe, and a very severe review of nineteenth century poetry. In detail, however, many of his theories seem to me steps in a wrong direction. His theory of art as expression led to a dismissal of such real questions as literary genres or literary evolution. His recently made[13] sharp distinction between poetry and literature seems quite untenable. Croce demands a history of poetry, which would be little more than applied poetics, and a history of literature which would be a part of the history of civilization. It seems impossible to uphold such a distinction, breaking up literature into a series of peaks of poetry and into valleys divided by some impenetrable bank of clouds. Croce's excessive individualism and expressionism explain why recent Italian scholarship has turned largely to an aesthetic and spiritual biography. Bertoni, Donadoni, Luigi Russo, and the more independent Borgese have all produced rather monographs and critical essays than literary history. One of the most gifted younger men, Mario Praz,[14] even represents a return to a spiritualized psychography. His studies of Marlowe, Donne, and Crashaw as well as the book called in English *The Romantic Agony,* but more correctly described by its Italian title as treating of *Flesh, Death and the Devil in Romantic Literature,* are fine achievements of a subtly psychoanalytical method. On the whole, the new idealism seems to have prevailed in Italy almost completely: it has even permeated literary journalism and that refractory science, linguistics. Its general speculative method has affected even those who have remained unconvinced by the systems of Croce or Gentile.

The situation in England is less easily classifiable. In England there prevail two traditions in literary scholarship: pure antiquarianism, which, with the method of the new

"bibliography" (textual and "higher" criticism, mostly of Shakespeare) as practiced by W. W. Greg and Dover Wilson, became very influential in recent decades, and the personal critical essay which, however, frequently degenerated into the display of sheer irresponsible whimsicality. In England, the distrust of the intellect and of any organized knowledge has gone apparently further than in any other country, at least in academic scholarship. Resignation in the face of any more difficult and abstract problem, unlimited skepticism as to the possibilities of a rational approach to poetry, and hence a complete absence of any thinking on fundamental problems of methodology, seem to have been characteristic, at least of the older group of scholars. To take one example: H. W. Garrod[15] asserts that poetry is "a subtle something or nothing," and that criticism is best which is written with the "least worry of head, the least disposition to break the heart over ultimate questions." Those who occasionally reflected on the implications of their work end either, like Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch[16], in a vague religious mysticism, or, like F. L. Lucas[17], in pure aesthetic impressionism and subjectivism.

But also in England a reaction has taken place which has gone in two different directions: one is the method of I. A. Richards, propounded in his *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and best applied in his *Practical Criticism* (1929). Richards is, of course, primarily a psychologist and semanticist who is interested in the therapeutic effects of poetry, in the reader's response and the patterning of his impulses. The implications of his theory are entirely naturalistic and positivistic; at times, he refers us, with an almost desperate naïveté, to the "hidden jungles of neurology." It is difficult to see of what use this supposed poised state of mind of the reader is for the study of literature, as Mr. Richards himself has to admit that it can be induced by a carpet or a gesture, an epigram or a sonata. But every theory which puts the onus on the effects in the individual mind of the reader is bound to lead to a complete anarchy of values and ultimately to barren skep-

ticism. Mr. Richards has himself drawn this conclusion, saying that "it is less important to like good poetry and to dislike bad than to be able to use it as a means to ordering our minds." This would mean that poetry is good or bad according to my momentary psychic needs; and anarchy is the logical consequence of refusing to see the objective structure of a work of art. Luckily, in his critical practice Mr. Richards ignores his theory most of the time. He has understood the wholeness and multiple meaning of a work of art and has inspired others to put his techniques of analysis of meaning to new uses.

His best pupil, William Empson,[18] has done in his *Seven Types of Ambiguity* more than anybody else to inaugurate the subtle and sometimes even over-ingenious analyses of poetic diction and implications which are flourishing today both in England and in this country. F. R. Leavis, editor of the Cambridge *Scrutiny* and influential teacher, has applied the methods of Richards with much sensitiveness and has combined them with a revaluation of the history of English poetry begun, with dogmatic assurance, in the essays of T. S. Eliot. Without giving up Richards' methods of interpreting poetry, Leavis has abandoned his pseudo-scientific apparatus. Without giving up Eliot's critical attitude towards modern civilization, Leavis has refused to follow him into the camp of Anglo-Catholicism. His stress on the unity of a work of art, his conception of tradition, his sharp rejection of an artificial distinction between literary history and criticism are all leading traits of the anti-positivistic movement. Geoffrey Tillotson[20] has also applied the methods of close inspection of the text derived from Richards to the poetry of Pope, with great sensitivity and much power of discrimination. But in the preface to a recent volume of *Essays in Criticism and Research,* he has defended a confused theory of historical reconstruction, and his own practice remains mostly on a level of atomistic uncorrelated observations.

A different approach to literary study in England is affiliated with the revival of Neo-Hegelianism and its conception of dialectical evolution. The great medievalist, W. P. Ker,[21]

in his last books, began to expound the conception of an evolution of genre as an almost Platonic pattern. Learnedly and skilfully, C. S. Lewis,[22] in his *Allegory of Love,* has combined an evolutionary scheme of genre-history with the history of man's attitude towards love and marriage. Lewis, furthermore, has argued wittily against the "personal heresy in criticism," the common over-rating of the biographical and psychological context of literature. It seems a pity that Lewis, in his recent work, has come to the defense of genteel convention and has attacked most that is vital in modern literature. The one Englishman who has shown a clear awareness of the problem of a history of literature which would not be a mere mirror of social change is F. W. Bateson,[23] to whom all English scholars owe a debt of gratitude for editing the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature.* In *The English Language and English Poetry,* he has criticized the "absence of all discrimination and the total lack of a sense of proportion in modern scholarship" and the mistake of nineteenth century historians of regarding literature as simply the product of social forces. His own remedy, a history of English poetry in close connection with linguistic change, is less convincing as Mr. Bateson thus reintroduced a one-sided dependence of literary evolution on a single outside force. But he has at least radically broken with positivistic preconceptions and suggested the central problem of a genuine literary history.

Also in the history of ideas closely connected with literary history, new viewpoints and methods begin to prevail in England. Basil Willey's *Seventeenth Century Background*[24] is written almost as if to illustrate the thesis of T. S. Eliot about the unified sensibility of the seventeenth century and its disintegration in its latter half. Willey's book certainly implies a strongly anti-naturalistic conception of human history and poetry. On the whole, however, the revolt against positivism in England is unsystematic, erratic, and frequently quite unclear as to its philosophical implications and affiliations. Theory seems still too much obsessed by a vaguely neurological

psychology. But at least dissatisfaction with the old type of scholarship is widespread.

The situation is, or rather was, very different in Germany. There, more so than in any other country, a veritable battle of methods was fought since the beginning of the twentieth century. Germany, which had been the motherland of philology and has been the bastion of philological literary history in the nineteenth century, reacted most sharply and most violently against its methods. This reaction went in all possible direction, going, as it is apparently usual in Germany, to almost unimaginable extremes. One group moved furthest in its contempt for traditional scholarship: the circle which gathered around the poet Stefan George and cultivated an abject adoration for his mission, an extravagant hero-worship for a few great figures of the past, and a studied neglect of the ordinary processes of patient research and slow induction. Friedrich Gundolf[25] is their greatest scholar; his complete ignoring of footnotes and references should not disguise his extraordinary learning. His earliest book on *Shakespeare and the German Spirit* is, to my mind, his best. It is a history of the influence of Shakespeare on German literature conceived of as a play and tension of spiritual forces illustrated by brilliant stylistic analyses of German translations and imitations. In his later books on Goethe, George, and Kleist, Gundolf developed a method of spiritual biography which he called statuesque and monumental. Mind and work are conceived as a unity and interpreted in a scheme of dialectical opposites which construct a myth or legend rather than a living man. Ernst Bertram,[26] a follower of Gundolf, has openly called his book on Nietzsche an attempt at a mythology.

Far less purely intuitive and arbitrary in their constructions are the German scholars whose interest centered around the problem of style, which is, of course, conceived by them not in purely descriptive terms but as the expression of a mind or a recurrent artistic or a unique historical type. German scholars in the Romance languages, partly under the influence of Croce,

have developed a type of linguistics which they call "idealistic", where linguistic and artistic creation are identified. Karl Vossler[27] has given examples of such studies, which interpret, for instance, the whole development of French civilization in terms of a close unity between linguistic and artistic evolution; and Leo Spitzer[28] has studied the style of many French authors in order to arrive at psychological and typological conclusions. Among students of German literature, attempts were rather made to define broadly historical stylistic types. Oskar Walzel[29] was, I believe, the first to apply the stylistic criteria evolved by an art-historian, Heinrich Wölfflin,[30] to the history of literature. Through him and several others the term "Baroque" spread to the history of literature; and periods and styles of literary history were described in terms of the corresponding periods of art-history. Fritz Strich[31] has applied the method with the greatest success in a book on *German Classicism and Romanticism*. According to Strich, the baroque characteristics hold good of romanticism, the Renaissance of classicism. Strich interprets Wölfflin's contraries of closed and open form as analogues to the opposition between the complete classical form and the open, unfinished, fragmentary and blurred form of romantic poetry expressive of man's longing for the infinite. In detail, Strich is full of subtle remarks and observations, but his general construction will not withstand closer criticism. Of more permanent value are several excellent stylistic histories of genres produced in Germany. Karl Vietor's *History of the German Ode*[32] and Guenther Mueller's *History of German Song*,[33] and the many studies of single literary devices such as Hermann Pongs' *Poetic Imagery*.[34] With Vossler and Strich, analysis of style clearly passes into general intellectual history.

This general intellectual history is another extremely diversified and productive movement in German scholarship. Partly it is simply the history of philosophy as mirrored in literature which is now being studied by men of real philosophical training and insight. In this field, Wilhelm Dilthey[35] was a leader; Ernst Cassirer, Rudolf Unger, and, in classical

philology, Werner Jaeger—to name only a few—can point to achievements probably unequaled in the history of literary scholarship. Partly there developed, mostly owing to the efforts of Rudolf Unger,[36] a less purely intellectualist approach to the history of attitudes toward such eternal problems as death, love, and fate. Unger, who has strong religious interests, has given an example of the method in a little book tracing the changes and continuities of the attitude toward death in Herder, Novalis, and Kleist; and his followers, Paul Kluckhohn[37] and Walter Rehm,[38] have developed the method on a large scale in studies of the concept of death and love, which are conceived as having their own logic and dialectical evolution. These scholars are writing a history of sensibility and sentiment as mirrored in literature rather than a history of literature itself.

But most German literary historians have come to cultivate the "history of the spirit," *Geistesgeschichte,* which aims to reconstruct, — to quote one exponent — the "spirit of a time from the different objectivations of an age — from religion through literature and the arts down to costumes and customs. We look for the totality behind the objects, and explain all facts by the time-spirit."[39] Thus a universal analogizing between all human activities is at the very center of the method which has stimulated a flood of writings on the "Gothic" man, the spirit of the Baroque, and the nature of romanticism. In a wider field, Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* is the best known example. In German literary history, a book by A. H. Korff,[40] *The Spirit of the Age of Goethe,* might be singled out as a boldly speculative attempt which manages to keep in touch with the texts and facts of literary history. The Hegelian Idea is the hero of the book; and its dialectical evolution through its symbolical expression in individual works of art is traced with great skill and surprising lucidity. Unquestionably the method can be and has been abused. To give only one example: Paul Meissner's[41] book on the English literary Baroque has used the simple formula of an-

tithesis and tension quite uncritically. He pursues it through all human activities from traveling to religion, from diary-writing to music. All the wealth of materials is neatly ordered into categories such as expansion and concentration, macrocosmos and microcosmos, sin and salvation, faith and reason. Meissner never raises the obvious question whether the same scheme of contraries could not be extracted from any period or whether the same material could not be arranged into a very different scheme of contraries. There are many books of this type in Germany—for example, Max Deutschbein's[42] or George Stefansky's[43] volumes intuiting the essence of Romanticism. They sometimes abound in learning and insight but construct fantastic houses of cards. The many writings by Herbert Cysarz[44] which include books on Experience and Idea in German literature, on German Baroque Poetry, and on Schiller are probably the most pretentious examples of wide learning, considerable speculative power, and even critical sensibility gone wild in an orgy of oracular declamation and abstract hair-splitting.

Seemingly on the opposite pole of these metaphysical intuitionists we find a whole group of German scholars who have tried to rewrite the history of German literature in terms of its biological and racial affiliations. One might list them among the belated positivists and pseudoscientists, if their concept of the German race or tribe were not essentially ideological and even mystical. A writer whose original affiliations were conservative and Catholic, Joseph Nadler,[45] has written a new history of German literature "from below," according to the tribes, districts and cities always constructing tribal souls of the different German "regions." Actually, his main thesis is a somewhat fantastic philosophy of German history: Western Germany, which has been settled since Julius Caesar, tried to recapture classical antiquity in German classicism; Eastern Germany, Slavic in its racial basis and Germanized securely only since the eighteenth century, tried rather, through the Romantic Period, to recapture the culture of medieval Germany. Romanticists, according to Nadler, come all from

the East of Germany; and if they don't (as, unfortunately for his theory, a good many don't) they are simply not genuine romanticists. But it would be unfair to Nadler not to stress his genuine merits: he has revived interest in the submerged and neglected Catholic South, he has a fine power of racy characterization and a sense for locality which is not at all useless in the study of the older frequently very local German literature. His conceptions seem to have prepared the way for Nazi literary history. Their point of view has come to the fore only since 1933, when fanatics and opportunists began to discover the possibilities of Nazi ideology for the purposes of literary history. The more obvious features of their revaluation of literary history need no description: their elimination or denigration of Jews, their stress on the anticipation of Nazi doctrines in the past, their contortions in fitting inconvenient but unavoidable figures like Goethe into this pattern.[46] It would be, however, an error to consider this Nazi literary history simply as racialist, a new pseudoscientific explanation of literary processes. Most recent German literary historians manage to combine racialism with old romantic conceptions of the national soul, and even with categories derived from *Geistesgeschichte* and the history of artistic styles. Though I do not wish to deny that individuals have continued to produce good work in the established methods and that some non-Nazis have paid merely lip-service to the official creed, the general level of German literary scholarship has declined rapidly since 1933. A mixture of resentful propaganda, racial mysticism, and romantic boasting characterizes its standard productions. One can only guess that the defeat of Nazi Germany must bring an inevitable reaction. On the whole, Germany represented the most baffling variety of schools and methods, a lively debating ground and experimenters' shop, in which everybody seems to have been sharply aware of the philosophical issues involved and was filled with a proud consciousness of the importance of literary scholarship.

Probably the least known developments are those of the

Slavic countries. This is in part due simply to the linguistic barriers and, of course, also to the very real gulf which has divided Western Europe from Russia, especially since the Bolshevik revolution. Russia, during the nineteenth century, produced a fine school of comparative literary historians, headed by Alexander Veselovsky,[47] who tried to write a natural history of literary forms drawing very largely from their studies of the abundant Slavic folklore. Besides, there flourished a metaphysical, or rather ideological, criticism which many English readers will know from one example: Nikolay Berdayev's book on Dostoyevsky.[48] In reaction against this either naturalistic-biological or religious-metaphysical study of literature, there arose, around 1916, a movement which called itself "Formalism." It is mainly opposed to the prevailing didacticism of Russian literary criticism; and, under the Bolsheviks, it was no doubt also a silent protest against or at least an escape from Marxist historical materialism prescribed by the party. The school of "Formalists" was suppressed around 1930; and there are, I believe, no open practitioners left in present-day Russia. Formalism was affiliated with Russian Futurism and, in its more technical aspects, with the new idealistic linguistics. The literary work of art is conceived by them as the "sum of all the devices employed in it": metrical structure, style, composition, all elements usually called form, but also the choice of topic, characterization, setting, plot, usually considered matter, are all treated equally as artistic means to the achievement of a certain effect. All these devices have a double character: organizing and deforming. If, for example, a linguistic element (sound, sentence-construction, etc.) is used just as it is in common language it will not attract attention; but as soon as the poet distorts it, by subjecting it to a certain organization, it will attract attention and thus become the object of aesthetic perception. The work of art and its specific "literariness" is resolutely put into the center of literary studies, and all its biographical and social relationships are minimized or considered as purely external. All the formalists have de-

veloped methods of astonishing ingenuity for analyzing sound-patterns, metrical systems of the different languages, principles of composition, types of poetic diction, etc., mostly in close collaboration with the new functional linguistics which developed "phonemics," now flourishing also in America. To give a few examples: Roman Jakobson[49] has put metrics on an entirely new basis by rejecting the purely acoustic or musical methods and by studying it in close connection with meaning and the phonetic system of the different languages. Viktor Shklovsky[50] has analyzed types of fiction and their technical devices in such terms as the "deformation" of ordinary time-sequence, the accumulation of obstacles for delaying action, etc. Osip Brik[51] has specialized in ingenious studies of sound-patterns which he sees as determining and being determined by diction and meter. Viktor Zhirmunsky[52] and Boris Tomashevsky have studied the theory and history of Russian versification and rhyme. Aikhenbaum and Tinyanov[53] have applied these techniques to an investigation of Russian works of literature which has put its history into a completely new light. The Russian formalists have also faced most resolutely and clearly the problem of literary history conceived as distinct from a mere history of manners and civilization in the mirror of literature. Profiting from Hegelian and Marxian dialectic but rejecting its universalizing dogmatism, they have written histories of genres and devices in purely literary terms. Literary history is for them the history of literary tradition and of literary devices. Each work of art is studied against the background of or as a reaction against preceding works of art, as the formalists conceive of the evolution of literature as a self-evolving process which maintains only external relations to the history of society or the individual experiences of the authors. New forms appear to them apotheoses of inferior genres. For example, Dostoyevsky's novels are simply exalted crime-stories, and Pushkin's lyrics are glorified album-verses. The more conservative wing among the group has done excellent work even on such traditional questions as the influence

of Byron on Pushkin, which Zhirmunsky conceived of not as a series of parallel passages but as the relation of two totalities. The more brilliant and more radical members have not avoided the dangers of shrill overstatement and rigid dogmatism. They certainly unduly minimized the philosophical and ethical aspects of literature. But Russian formalism was, at least, an important antidote against the official Marxian interpretation of literature. The average Marxist critic seems to me only a revived positivist. He usually indulges in more less ingenious exercises in the game of fixing this or that literary work of art in this or that particular stage of economic development. The causal relationship between society and literature is put in crudely deterministic terms. But the subtler practitioners, such as P. Sakulin, remained literary while being genuinely preoccupied with sociology. Sakulin's *History of Russian Literature*[54] traces the history of art in close connection with the audience and class to which it appealed and to the social strata from which the artists were derived. The process is seen as a dialectical tension of art and society and as the successive rise of the lower classes to literary productivity.

Russian formalism influenced profoundly the two other Slavic countries I know. In Poland, Roman Ingarden[55] has written an extremely subtle analysis of the poetic work of art, using the terminology of German phenomenology as developed by Edmund Husserl. Ingarden conceives of the work of art as a system of strata which rise from the sound-pattern towards the metaphysical qualities which emerge finally from its totality. Ingarden is a speculative philosopher remote from the practice of literary history. More technical literary history had been primarily ideological and nationalistic. But Manfred Kridl[56] has produced and inspired many formalistic studies employing the Russian methods and has written a powerful attack on the study of literature by non-literary methods. His own "integrally literary" method minimizes the social bearings of literature consistently and revolts against the confusion of methods prevalent in most literary history.

Czechoslovakia, the last country on our list, was fortunate to receive one of the most original and productive members of the Russian Formalist school, Roman Jakobson. Jakobson could affiliate with a group of Czechs who, even before his arrival, had reacted against the dominant historical, ideological or psychological methods of the study of literature. The Prague Linguistic Circle was organized in 1926, under the chairmanship of Vilém Mathesius. The members of the Circle applied the methods of literary study developed by the Russians to new materials but also tried to reformulate them more philosophically. They replaced the term "formalism" by "structuralism" (which in English has its own difficulties); and they combined the purely formalistic approach with sociological and ideological methods. The most productive member of the school is Jan Mukarovsky,[57] who has not only produced brilliant studies of individual works of poetry, of the history of Czech metrics, and poetic diction, but also has speculated interestingly on fitting the formalistic theory into a whole philosophy of symbolic forms, and on combining it with a social approach which would see the relationship between social and literary evolution as a dialectical tension. I trust that my view is not falsified by years of membership in the Prague Circle, if I express my conviction that here in the close cooperation with modern linguistics and with modern philosophy are the germs of a future fruitful development of literary studies.

Our survey of the new methods of literary study practiced in Europe had to be very hasty and even sketchy. A whole volume could be written on each individual country.[58] But perhaps this sketch has suggested at least some feeling of the bewildering variety of methods which are, or rather were, being cultivated in Europe. It may have pointed out at least some of the major, very striking differences among seven European countries. Possibly it has also suggested some fundamental similarities among these movements. They are not only negative. There is a new will for synthesis, for speculative daring, for philosophical penetration; and there is also a new

desire for closer and closer analysis of the actual work of art in its totality and unity. Both these expansions and concentrations are healthy signs, though I am the last to deny that, in its extreme forms, the reaction has its own dangers. Bold speculations, sweeping vistas, subtle analyses, and sensitive judgments may make us forget the necessity of a solid understructure in wide knowledge of relevant facts which the old philology, at its best, tended to produce. We want not less scholarship and less knowledge, but more scholarship, more intelligent scholarship, centered around the main problems which arise in the study of literature, both as an art and as an expression of our civilization.

[1] *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*, Berlin, 1883.

[2] *Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft*, Strassburg, 1894. Reprinted in *Präludien*, Tübingen, 1907. Vol. 1.

[3] *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung*, Tübingen, 1921.

[4] *Les Principes fondamentaux de l'histoire*, Paris, 1894. Second ed. with title *La Théorie de l'histoire*, Paris, 1908.

[5] *Teoria e storia della storiografia*, Bari, 1917. Translated as *History: Its Theory and Practice* by Douglas Ainslie, New York, 1923.

[6] For instance, Abel LeFranc's *Rabelais*, Pierre Villey's edition of the *Essais* of Montaigne, Daniel Mornet's edition of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Heloise*.

[7] 3 vols., Paris, 1934.

[8] *Les idées et les lettres*, Paris, 1932.

[9] *L'Histoire du sentiment religieux en France*, 11 vols., Paris, 1923-33. Partial English translation as *A Literary History of Religious Thought in France*, New York, 1928-36. 3 vols.

[10] *L'Evolution psychologique de la littérature en Angleterre*, Paris, 1920, and the second half of E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, Paris, 1924. English translation by H. D. Irvine, 2 vols., London, 1926-7.

[11] "La synthèse en histoire littéraire: Littérature comparée et littérature générale," in *Revue de synthèse historique*, XXXI (1921). *Le préromantisme*, Paris, 1924-30. 2 vols.,

[12] " La critica letteraria" (1894), reprinted in *Primi Saggi*, Bari, 1919. *La Poesia di Dante*, Bari, 1920; *Ariosto, Shakespeare e Corneille*, Bari, 1920; *Goethe*, Bari, 1919; *Poesia e non poesia*, Bari, 1923.

[13] *La Poesia. Introduzione alla Critica e Storia della Poesia e della Letteratura*, Bari, 1936.

[14] "Christopher Marlowe" in *English Studies*, XIII (1931). *Secentismo e Marinismo in Inghilterra*, Firenze, 1925. *La Carne, la Morte e il Diavolo nella Letteratura Romantica*, Milano, 1930. cf. *The Romantic Agony*, translated by Angus Davidson, London, 1933.

[18] *The Profession of Poetry*, Oxford, 1929, p. 47. *Poetry and the Criticism of Life*, Oxford, 1931, p. 156-7.

[19] *The Poet as Citizen and other Papers*, Cambridge, 1934, p. 134.

[17] "Criticism" in *Life and Letters*, II (1929). *The Criticism of Poetry*, London, 1933.

[16] London 1930. See also *Some Versions of Pastoral*, London, 1935.

[19] *How to Teach Reading*, London, 1932. *New Bearings in English Poetry*, London, 1932. *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry*, London, 1936. See my paper "Literary Criticism and Philosophy," in *Scrutiny*, V (1937).

[20] *On the Poetry of Pope*, Oxford, 1939. *Essays in Criticism and Research*, Cambridge, 1942. cf. my review in *Modern Philology*, XLI (1944).

[21] *Form and Style in Poetry*. Ed. R. W. Chambers. London, 1928.

[22] Oxford, 1936. C. S. Lewis and E. M. Tillyard, *The Personal Heresy: A Controversy*, Oxford, 1934. *Rehabilitations*, London, 1939.

[23] Oxford, 1934.

[24] London, 1934. *The Eighteenth Century Background* (London, 1940) is less distinguished.

[25] *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*, Berlin, 1911. *Goethe*, Berlin, 1916. *George*, Berlin, 1920. *Heinrich von Kleist*, Berlin, 1922.

[26] *Nietzsche, Versuch einer Mythologie*, Berlin, 1920.

[27] *Frankreichs Kultur im Spiegel seiner Sprachentwicklung*, Heidelberg, 1913. *Positivismus und Idealismus in der Sprachwissenschaft*, Heidelberg, 1904.

[28] *Stilstudien*, München, 1928, 2 vols. *Romanische Stil-und Literaturstudien*, Marburg, 1931, 2 vols.

[29] *Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste*, Berlin, 1917. *Gehalt und Gestalt im Kunstwerk des Dichters*, Berlin-Potsdam, 1923. *Das Wortkunstwerk*, Leipzig, 1926.

[30] *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, München, 1915. *Principles of Art History*, translated by M. D. Hottinger, London, 1932.

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[32] *Geschichte der deutschen Ode*, München, 1923.

[33] *Geschichte des deutschen Liedes*, München, 1925.

[34] *Das Bild in der Dichtung*, 2 vols. Marburg, 1927-34.

[35] *Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin, 1923-36, 12 vols.—Ernst Cassirer, *Idee und Gestalt*, Berlin, 1921. *Freiheit und Form*, Berlin, 1922.— Rudolf Unger, *Hamann und die deutsche Aufklärung*, Halle, 1911, 2 vols.—Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: Die Formung des griechischen Menschen*. Vol. I, Berlin, 1934. Translated by G. Highet as *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, New York, 1939-44. 3 vols.

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[37] *Die Auffassung der Liebe in der Literatur des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts und in der Romantik*, Halle, 1922.

[38] *Der Todesgedanke in der deutschen Dichtung*, Halle, 1928.

[39] M. W. Eppelsheimer, "Das Renaissanceproblem", in *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Geistesgeschichte und Literaturwissenschaft, XI* (1933), p. 497.

[40] *Geist der Goethezeit, Versuch einer ideellen Entwicklung der klassisch-romantischen Literaturgeschichte,* Leipzig, 1923, 1930, 1940. 3 vols.

[41] *Die geisteswissenschaftlichen Grundlagen des englischen Literaturbarocks,* Berlin, 1934. A fuller discussion of *Geistesgeschichte* may be found in my "Parallelism between Literature and the Fine Arts," in *English Institute Annual,* 1941 (New York, 1942).

[42] *Das Wesen des Romantischen,* Cöthen, 1921.

[43] *Das Wesen der deutschen Romantik,* Stuttgart, 1923.

[44] *Erfahrung und Idee,* Wien, 1921. *Deutsche Barockdichtung,* Leipzig, 1924. *Literaturgeschichte als Geisteswissenschaft,* Halle, 1926. *Schiller,* Halle, 1934.

[45] *Literaturgeschichte der deutschen Stämme und Landschaften,* Regensburg, 1912-28, 4 vols. A new nazified edition called *Literaturgeschichte des deutschen Volkes* has begun to appear in 1938. cf. also *Die Berliner Romantik,* Berlin, 1921.

[46] H. G. Atkins, *German Literature through Nazi Eyes,* London, 1941.

[47] *Iztorícheskaya Poetika* (Historical Poetics), ed. V. Zhirmunski, Leningrad, 1940.

[48] English translation (from the French) by Donald Attwater, New York, 1934.

[49] See especially *O cheshskom stiche* (On Czech Verse), Berlin, 1923.

[50] *Teoriyi prozy* (The Theory of Prose), Moscow, 1925. Sec. ed., 1929.

[51] Papers in *Opoyaz: Sbornik pro teoriyi poeticheskogo jazyka* (A symposium on the theory of the language of poetry), Leningrad, 1916, 1917, and 1919 (The last volume is called *Poetika*).

[52] Viktor Zhirmunsky, *Rifma, yeye istoriya i teoriya* (Rhyme: Its History and Theory), Leningrad, 1923; *Byron i Pushkin,* Leningrad, 1924. — Boris Tomashevski, *Ruskoye stikhoslozhenye* (Russian Metrics), Leningrad, 1923; *Teoriya literatury,* Leningrad, 1925.

[53] Boris Aikhenbaum, *Molodoy Tolstoy* (The Young Tolstoy), Leningrad, 1922; *Literatura: teoriya, kritika, polemika,* Leningrad, 1926. *Lev Tolstoy,* 2 vols. Leningrad, 1931. — Yuryi Tinyanyov, *Problema stikhotvornogo jazyka,* Leningrad, 1924 (The Problem of Poetic Language).

[54] *Geschichte der russischen Literatur,* Berlin, 1927, in Oskar Walzel's *Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft.*

[55] *Das dichterische Kunstwerk,* Halle, 1931. *O poznawaniu dziela literackiego* (About Knowing a Literary Work of Art), Lwów, 1937.

[56] *Wstęp do badan nad dzielem literackiem* (Introduction to the Investigation of the Literary Work of Art), Wilno, 1936.

[57] *Máchuv Máj, Estetická studie* (Macha's May, An Aesthetic Study), Prague, 1928. *Estetická funkce, norma a hodnota jako sociální fakty* (Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts), Prague, 1936. "L'Art comme fait sémiologique," (a paper given at the tenth International Congress of Philosophy, Prague, 1934).

[58] I know of no similar survey of recent scholarship. Individual countries or groups of scholars are treated in Phillipe van Tieghem's *Nouvelles tendances*

en histoire littéraire, Paris, 1930; J. Petersen's *Die Wesensbestimmung der deutschen Romantik,* Leipzig, 1926; Werner Mahrholz's *Literaturgeschichte und Literaturwissenschaft,* second ed., Leipzig, 1932; Martin Schütze's *Academic Illusions,* Chicago, 1933; H. Rossner's *Georgekreis und Literaturwissenschaft,* Frankfurt, 1938; Horst Oppel's *Die Literaturwissenschaft in der Gegenwart, Stuttgart,* 1939; V. Zhirmunsky, "Formproblems in der russischen Literaturwissenschaft," in *Zeitschrift für slavische Philology* I (1925). Nina Gourfinkel's "Nouvelles methodes d'histoire littéraire en Russie," in *Le Monde Slave,* VI (1929); Manfred Kridl's "Russian Formalism," in *American Bookman,* I (1944).

II

DECLARATIONS

THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SPEECH

By

LESLIE A. WHITE

We can distinguish three stages in the development of vocal communication. In the first and most primitive stage the meanings of the vocal utterances are inherent in the sounds and the sounds are produced by instinct. In the second stage, meanings become attached to sounds, and are dependent, therefore, upon the situation rather than upon germ plasm. In the third stage, which is found only in the human species, meanings are determined and bestowed upon sounds by man himself. Let us examine each type in turn.

Vocal communication among some of the lower animals may properly be called instinctive. By this we mean that the utterances they make are direct, unlearned expressions of their organisms which indicate a state or condition of the organism. And, just as the production of these sounds is instinctive, so also is their appreciation by members of the species; the animal hearing them understands them (i.e., responds appropriately) by virtue of his own inborn neuro-sensory equipment. Thus, vocal communication of this type is simple, elemental, wholly instinctive. The production of sounds and the responses thereto are determined by the inherent properties of the organism. The meanings of the utterances are inherent in the sounds, which means that they are inherent in the organisms themselves.

In the second type of communication the meanings of the sounds are not inherent in the organisms of the animals concerned but are acquired by them. Thus, a certain sound might come to mean "Here is food" to a pig. We teach dogs, horses, and other animals to respond appropriately to vocal commands.

The sounds "roll over" are originally meaningless to a dog. In time, however, by means of the mechanism known as *conditioned reflex,* the dog learns to roll over at the proper command. The sounds have acquired a meaning for the dog. In contrast with Type I, this meaning has come to the dog from the external world, not from his own organism. To be sure, the dog must have a certain type of nervous system to be able to acquire new meanings in this way; not every animal can do this. But the point here is that the meaning of the instrument of communication, the vocal command, is determined by external circumstance, not by the dog's neuro-sensory constitution. The meaning is not inherent in the sound but is acquired by it through experience.

In the third type of communication, meanings are bestowed upon sounds by those who use them. Thus the sound combination *po* may be given the meaning "fried rabbit," "come quickly," or "unfortunate." *Po,* which is quite meaningless in itself, has acquired a meaning and a significance. But is this not like the sounds "roll over" that acquire meaning for the dog? In neither instance is meaning inherent in the sounds. In both cases it is acquired through experience, the dog learning the meaning of the sounds as we learn the meaning of *po* or of *chien, hund,* or *syzygy.*

The two cases are indeed so much alike that the great Darwin argued in *The Descent of Man* that there is no fundamental difference between the mind of man and that of lower animals, but merely a difference of degree. "The lower animals differ from man solely in his almost infinitely larger power of associating together the most diversified sounds and ideas," he argues (Ch. 3, 18). Many psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists today still think as Darwin did decades ago, and maintain that man merely has more extensive mental powers than his sub-human relatives but none that is unique.

We are obliged, however, to disagree with Darwin and with present-day scholars who share his view.[1] The difference between the mind of man and that of the lower animals *is*

fundamental and is one of kind rather than merely of degree. An analysis of this difference leads us into the heart of the problem of speech.

Man is able to use symbols; no other creature possesses this ability.[2] A symbol is a thing whose meaning is determined by those who use it as a means of communication. A symbol may have any perceptible form: a gesture, a sound, a shape, color, taste or odor. The most important form of symbolic expression is, however, articulate speech. Sounds—or, in writing, marks—are endowed with meaning by human beings who are thereby enabled to communicate ideas with them. Thus, "see," "cat," "sweet," "faint," etc., are made significant by arbitrary assignment of value to them and by mutual agreement to recognize these values. But are we not back again to the dog who has learned to sit up and bark at the command "Beg!"? Does not the dog learn the meaning of "words and sentences," to use Darwin's phrase, as we do? Yes, he does indeed, but this is not the whole story. The dog can acquire new meanings but he cannot originate them. The dog can learn the meanings of words, but he cannot determine what those meanings may be. Herein lies the difference between the mind of man and that of other living creatures, even the highest. Man can originate and bestow meaning and value upon things as he chooses. We can let x equal anything we please, a ton of coal, ten parsecs or the honor of a king; red can stand for danger, courage, or a subversive political movement. In the realm of symbols, man can do as he pleases; he can assign any meaning to anything. No other creature can do this. Upon this unique faculty the whole of *human* existence depends and rests. It is the exercise of this ability that has created all civilizations of mankind. Before surveying the consequences of the symbolic faculty, however, let us analyze the difference between man and dog a bit further.

The dog understands words and phrases, as we know. He lies down, begs, and rolls over at the proper commands. But what he is doing is responding to a class of stimuli which

we call *signs*. A *sign*, as we shall use the term, is something which indicates something else. We see smoke and infer fire; we see a red light and avoid danger. The meaning, the significance, of the sign may inhere in the physical properties of the sign itself and in its relation to the thing indicated, as in the case of smoke indicating the presence of fire. Or, the sign's meaning may be merely associated with its physical form, identified with it through the mechanism of the conditioned reflex, as in the case of the red light signifying danger. In either case, however, once the meaning of the sign has become identified with its physical form through association or conditioning, it functions as if it really were inherent in it. Let us now return to words.

Words function both as symbols and as signs. In other words, they are sometimes employed in *symbol* contexts, sometimes in *sign* contexts. The meaning of symbols cannot be perceived with the senses. One cannot tell, for example, what the sound compound *dola* means merely by hearing it. When the Spaniards first entered Mexico they could hear the Aztec word *calli* distinctly enough, but they had no way of telling from the sound alone whether it meant "house," or "tired." Neither could the Aztecs tell what *santo* means in Spanish merely by listening to its sound. The meanings of symbols can be grasped, and hence communicated, only by means of a neural structure for which we have no better name than "symbolic mechanism." Similarly with symbols in other forms. We cannot tell merely by looking at a color whether it stands for sorrow, courage, or leprosy. Symbolic gestures do not betray their significance to the senses. We can discover the meaning of symbols only by means of symbolic communication itself, by the exercise of our neurological symbolic faculty.

To say that we cannot perceive the values of symbols is, of course, but another way of saying that their meanings are not inherent in them but are derived from another source. We can discover the saline value of salt, or the saccharine value of sugar, with our senses because these properties are an in-

tegral part of their atomic and molecular structure. But we cannot tell, by any amount of sensory inquiry, or by physical and chemical examination, whether these articles will sell for two cents a pound or six. Their commercial value is a symbolic value, bestowed upon them by society just as meanings are assigned to hat-tipping and green lights. The realm of symbols is, therefore, a supra-sensory world, so to speak, a region in which values live and function but they cannot be grasped and measured with our senses. To be sure, symbols must have physical forms, and these forms are perceptible, otherwise they could not enter our experience at all. But the physical form of a symbol is one thing; its meaning quite another. Symbols are, therefore, imperceptible values lodged in physical forms. The only way in which symbolic meanings can be communicated is by the same means which brings them into being in the first instance: the neurological "symbolic faculty." Animals who lack this faculty can never experience values which can exist only in symbolic form. This is why no other creature can ever enter the world of man, the human being.

Symbols are created by bestowing a meaning or value upon some physical form. But after one has encountered the meaning in its physical form a few times they become so fused in experience that the physical form itself is able to express and to communicate the meaning. Thus we can coin a word, *bota,* give it the meaning "close your eyes." After a few experiences the meaning becomes so identified with the sounds that we can respond immediately and appropriately upon hearing them. We can also distinguish *bota* from *boka* which might mean "shake your head." We see, then, that after the meaning has become identified with the physical form through the process of conditioning, we behave as if the meaning were inherent in the sounds, for we now perceive the meanings with our senses. But the words are no longer functioning in the *symbol* context; they are now functioning as *signs.* In human behavior, therefore, words originate as symbols, but

after we have learned their meaning they function as signs. Let us return now to our dog who "understands words and sentences" and see what the situation is there.

We can invent a word, *pado,* give it a meaning, "sit down," and teach the dog to react appropriately to the command; we say "Pado!" and the dog sits down. But suppose a human being were our subject instead of a dog. Would the two experiments differ in any significant respect? Not at all. The human being might learn more quickly or he might not, but so far as the *kind* of behavior involved is concerned, the two experiments would not differ at all. In each case, sounds acquire a meaning, the subject of the experiment learns it, and reacts accordingly. How, then, do dogs differ from men in word behavior? Simply in this: words can only be *signs* to a dog; they are *symbols* as well as *signs* to man.

Here is what the dog cannot do: He cannot bestow meanings upon things. He can acquire new meanings but he cannot originate them. He can learn what meaning has been given to *pado,* but he cannot take any part in the determination of that meaning. Moreover, the range of meanings which he can acquire is limited by the range of his senses; he cannot ever receive symbolic meanings because they lie beyond the boundaries of mere perception. Thus a dog could be taught to respond in a specific manner to the word *sin* or *holy.* He could distinguish between *sin* and *pin,* or *skin,* as we do, and react to each in a definitely prescribed manner. But he could never have any conception of what *sin* means to us, because this word, like all other words, has also a symbolic significance as well as a sign significance and that can be grasped only by the special neural mechanism which man alone possesses.

Here we have, then, the difference between the mind of a dog, or any other of the lower animals, and the mind of man. Man can originate and bestow meaning upon any thing he chooses. He can communicate these meanings to others of his kind in the vehicle of physical forms. The dogs, apes, rats, etc., can only acquire meanings which have become

identified in their experience with certain forms. They can have no part in determining these meanings. And they cannot rise above the level of sense perception in their grasp of meaning. The significance of this difference is, of course, tremendous; it is the difference between a human being and a mere brute. But before examining this difference in detail, let us inquire into its origin.

A man sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, and smells with his nose. But what does he "symbol" with? Since the most conspicuous and important form of symbolic expression is articulate speech, some have thought that this peculiarly human faculty lies in the organs of speech. But there are no "organs of speech," properly speaking. There are, of course, organs of vocal utterance, but speech is more than mere sound. Some birds are able to reproduce the sounds of words, but this is not speech. Apes have the anatomical and muscular mechanisms requisite for speech so far as jaws, tongue, lips larynx, etc., are concerned, yet they are incapable of speech. On the other hand, the communication of ideas by symbolic means does not require articulate vocal utterance, as we know. We can do this with writing or with other gestures. Given the ability to use symbols, to assign meanings to physical forms, we could devise a system of communication in which we did no more than move a single finger or toe in a system of dots and dashes. We could even symbol with our ears if we could move them. In short, we could communicate symbolically with any part of our body which we can move at will and which can be observed by someone else. To be sure, these non-vocal means of symbolic communication would be more cumbersome and less efficient than spoken words, but they are no less possible. The human species uses vocal utterance as its principal means of symbolic communication not because it is the only possible one, for there are many other possibilities, but because it is the easiest, the most efficient and economical.

If the "organs of speech" are not the seat of symbolic communication, what then is? The fact of the matter is that we

know very little about the basis of this faculty. We have no doubt but that it resides in the nervous system, especially in the forebrain. But it is easy to jump to unwarranted conclusions here. The ape's brain is very much like man's, yet the ape is without symbols. Man's brain is larger than the ape's, both absolutely and relatively in proportion to body size, and is more highly convoluted. But man has no kind of brain cells or brain connections that the ape does not have; both brains are composed of the same kind of material and are constructed on essentially the same plan. How is it, then, that man is capable of symboling whereas the ape is not?

The only answer at the present time appears to be: more brain. Sometimes differences in quantity produce differences in quality; additions of degree eventuate in differences in kind. Thus additional quantities of heat will transform water into a different kind of structure: vapor. When development within the egg reaches a certain point, the bird hatches and embarks upon a new kind of life. In somewhat the same way, we reason, when the primate brain had reached a certain stage of development a new kind of function became possible. This is a reasonable and valid assumption, but it does not tell us much. The fact is, we know almost nothing about the neurology of symboling.

We are not to assume, of course, that the transition from the sub-symbolic level to the symbolic in primate evolution took place suddenly. The ability to use symbols does not mature overnight in the child, but requires considerable time to become habitual and effective. In the same way, we may assume, it took time, perhaps thousands of years, for the evolving symbolic faculty among anthropoids to become sufficiently developed to receive overt expression, and still longer for it to become an habitual and effective instrument in the conduct of life.

But the fact that the transition from non-symbolic to symbolic behavior in the species and in the individual is gradual rather than sudden in no way invalidates our contention that

the difference is one of kind rather than of degree. An animal is either able to symbol or it is not; there are no half-way stages. All attempts to teach apes, our nearest non-human relatives, to talk have failed. It is not that such efforts have met with little success; they have had *no success at all.*[3]

Let us turn now to the consequences of the use of symbols. We have said earlier that everything that is peculiarly human, everything that separates man from the lower animals, all civilizations, depend upon the symbolic faculty. We shall now see how this can be true. Anatomically, man is much like the anthropoid apes. Temperamentally, too, man closely resembles his simian relatives, much more so, for example, than he does the ungulates, rodents, or carnivores. Physiologically, in the dynamics of the living processes, man is fundamentally like, not only the other primates, not only other mammals, but other vertebrates, including the fishes. But in one respect man is different, and this difference sets him off from all other creatures and makes him unique on earth: symbols. It was a sound intuition that led earlier peoples to declare "In the beginning was the word." Sound, too, was their appreciation of the creative power of words, for it was words that transformed an ape into a man, and the crude culture of a savage into the civilization of today.

It used to be customary to define man as the tool-using animal. But apes use tools with versatility and skill. Not only that, they can even invent and make tools. But the use of tools among apes is a discontinuous process, subjectively as well as objectively. Being discontinuous it is neither cumulative nor progressive. One generation of apes begins its career of tool-using where the preceding generation began. With man it is different. To man a tool is not merely an object, an instrument with which to cut or pound. It is also an idea, a concept which is expressed in symbolic form. Thus the actual tool may often lie outside the range of his sensory experience. But the idea-tool is with him always. So vivid and real is the tool-idea that man comes to regard it as primary,

as the ideal of which real tools are only imperfect and ephemeral copies. In this way, the tool process in the human species becomes a continuous process; and, being continuous, it can become cumulative and progressive. It was the symbolic faculty which transformed the occasional and discrete tool experiences of the ape into the continuous, cumulative, progressive process that has produced our civilizations in their material aspects.[4]

The social and intellectual superstructures of all civilizations must, of course, rest upon a material, mechanical basis that has been wrought with tools. Without a civilized technology there could be no civilized society or philosophy. Contrariwise, a primitive technology must mean a primitive type of social life and thought. The Tool is the measure of civilizations.

But if the tool is both basis and measure, the symbol is always the means, for without symbols social and intellectual life above the anthropoid level would be impossible.

Without articulate speech we would have no rules of social life other than those arising from desire, directed by whim and validated by brute force. We could have rules neither of monogamy nor of polygamy, for how could these concepts be communicated and agreed upon without symbolic communication? How could one know that he might have two mates, providing he possessed them one at a time but not both at once, without speech? How could one know that he could marry a cousin of the second degree but not of the first, without language? Indeed, how could we have any classification of relatives at all were it not for words to distinguish one from another?

How could one know right from wrong without symbols? How could there *be* a right or a wrong? How could one know that the kid should not be seethed in the mother's milk if he were not told? Or, that he should not mar the corners of his beard? How could he know how many souls he had (the number varies, of course, in the beliefs of man), which god to

worship, which spirit to exorcise, and how to dispose of the dead, if it were not possible to symbol?

Examples are endless.[5] From one end of human behavior (behavior, that is, which is peculiar to the species man) to the other, from the simplest thing in civilization to a World State, a Universal Church, or the Philosophy of Science, the symbol is the *sine qua non* of existence.

We can now see even more clearly the uniqueness of symbolic experience in the human species. It is impossible to bring any dog, rat or ape, no matter how intelligent, to any appreciation of the significance of such concepts as *cousin, Tuesday, 3, kosher, money, etc.* The most gifted ape can never know the difference between a Buddhist and a Baptist, that it might be wrong for him to eat bananas on Wotan's day, or that he may not marry his cousin. We could teach a dog to react in a certian way to the stimulus $\sqrt{-1}$, Santa Maria, or " 'twas brillig and the slithy toves," but we could never bring him to an appreciation of the meanings they have for us. Our life is a thing apart. Our world, with its heavens and its gods, its institutions and its laws, its morals and rituals, its arts, philosophies and science, is a house built with symbols and in it we live alone. We may, as fellow animals, play with dogs or labor with camels and oxen. But our brute friends can never cross the threshold of our house and share our symbols with us. This is our own, our private world.

[1] Darwin's error might be excused on the ground that he was trying to demonstrate man's animal origin and his oneness with other animals in a day when a very different view was widely held. As a matter of fact, this error — error of exaggeration, only — of his served a good cause better than a correct statement would have done. But nowadays, when man's animal origin is taken for granted, there is little excuse for failure to recognize the gap between the human mind and that of the lower animals.

[2] See, White, Leslie A., "The Symbol: the Origin and Basis of Human Behavior," (Philosophy of Science, Vol. 7, pp. 451-463, Oct., 1940: reprinted in ETC., a Review of General Semantics, Vol. 1, pp. 229-237; Summer, 1944).

[3] Cf., W. N. and L. A. Kellogg, *The Ape and the Child*, p. 281 (New York, 1933).

[4] Cf., White, Leslie A., "On the Use of Tools by Primates," (The Journal of Comparative Psychology, Vol. 34, pp. 369-374, Dec., 1942).

[5] See G. A. Dorsey's excellent discussion of this subject in his chapter "In the Beginning was the Word," in *Man's Own Show: Civilization* (New York, 1931).

VOCABULARY AND SUCCESS

By

JOHNSON O'CONNOR

What is success? And how is it gained? Whether one thinks of success as financial reward, or as assured social position, or as satisfaction in able work accomplished and recognized, or as a combination of the three and something more, many factors contribute. Most of them elude our understanding and remain intangibly beyond definition. A vital force drives some individuals over every obstacle. With others that great generalization, character, adds strength of a different sort. Neither may ever be restricted to a hard and fast formula; certainly, at the moment, neither can be measured. But other more "concrete constituents of success" have been isolated and studied in the laboratory. One of these is a large English vocabulary."

An extensive knowledge of the exact meanings of English words accompanies outstanding success in this country more often than any other single characteristic which the Human Engineering Laboratories have been able to isolate and measure.

What is meant by vocabulary? Just what the word signifies. Does the word *enervating* mean *soothing, exciting, distressing, invigorating,* or *weakening?* For most well-educated persons the choice is between *invigorating* and *weakening.* Fifty-two per cent of the college graduates whom we have measured choose *invigorating* as the synonym; only sixteen per cent choose *weakening,* the dictionary definition. Does *stilted* in the phrase, 'his stilted manner,' mean *irresolute, improper, cordial, stiffly formal,* or *vicious?* A majority of educated persons mark *stiffly formal,* but more than a third mark *irresolute.*

Answers to the meaning of *scurrilous,* in the phrase, 'scurrilous rogue,' divide themselves more or less evenly between *hurrying, desperate, abusive, frantic,* and *diseased,* with *desperate* the most popular. For *peremptory,* a majority mark *decisive,* but many choose *persuasive, uncertain,* and *angry. Pleasant,* the fifth choice, is not as popular. *Linguist* and *glutton* are equally enticing as synonyms for *polyglot.* For *refulgent,* in 'a refulgent smile,' *repellent* is most intriguing and *very bright* next, with *mischievous, flattering,* and *sour* all following closely in popularity. For *monograph* forty per cent choose *soliloquy* and less than twenty per cent *treatise* and *epitaph* each.

The word *vocabulary,* as used in this article, signifies a knowledge of the dictionary meaning of just such words as *enervating, stilted, scurrilous, peremptory, polyglot, refulgent,* and *monograph.* Not until one attempts to pick an exact synonym does one realize the difficulty. One may like the sound of a word and use it in a picturesque way without being accurate in its meaning.

I

To measure the vocabulary of an individual, the Laboratory uses a list of one hundred and fifty test words. Each is printed in italics in a short phrase and is followed by five choices, all of which fit the phrase but only one of which is a synonym of the test word. The instructions are: 'Underline that one of the five choices which is nearest in meaning to the word in italics.' The words to be defined were selected by Alexander Inglis of the Graduate School of Education, Harvard University. His intention was to include words which appear once or twice in 100,000 words of printed matter. It is a general reader's vocabulary from which technical terms have been excluded. The test words vary from some that are quite easy, such as

Thrilling experiences — dangerous, exciting, unusual, disgusting, profitable,

to others that are more difficult, such as

Glabrous heads — bald, over-sized, hairy, square, round,

which only twenty-one per cent of college graduates mark correctly. Since one-fifth, or twenty percent, should guess the correct answer, the meaning of *glabrous* is practically unkonwn. The test measures knowledge of words one recognizes, not necessarily of those one uses. The words one uses accurately are, no doubt, fewer than those one recognizes, but there is probably a relation between the two.

Three hundred high-school freshmen average 76 errors in the list of 150 words. Seven hundred college freshmen average 42 errors. One thousand college graduates from a wide variety of colleges — most of them, however, in the eastern part of the United States — average 27 errors, and vary from the one person in a thousand who achieves a perfect score to the one who knows less than 50 of the 150 items. The college professors whom we have measured average 8 errors; major executives average 7 errors. Major executives score higher in this English vocabulary test than any other selected group with which we have experimented.

By the term 'major executives' is meant all individuals who, for five years or longer, have held the position of president or vice president in a business organization. Such a definition includes both successful and unsuccessful executives, provided only that they have survived five years; it includes alike forceful personalities and figure-heads; but it has the great advantage of excluding our personal judgment from the process of selection. Major executives as thus defined average in the top ten per cent of college graduates as a whole.

Although it is impossible to define success rigidly or scientifically, it seems to be true, nevertheless, that a large vocabulary is typical, not exclusively of executives, but of successful individuals. It happens that in the business world successful men and women are designated by this special appellation, 'executive.' The successful lawyer or doctor is marked by no such name. But if, to the best of one's ability, one selects successful persons in the professions, they also score high in vocabulary.

For one meaning of success the Century dictionary gives 'a high degree of worldly prosperity.' The measured English vocabulary of an executive correlates with his salary. This does not mean that every high-vocabulary person receives a large salary, but the relation between the two is close enough to show that a large vocabulary is one element, and seemingly an important one.

Furthermore, the executive level which a man or woman reaches is determined to some extent by vocabulary. In many manufacturing organizations the first step in the executive ladder is the leading hand, called sometimes the working foreman. This man is in charge of half a dozen or a dozen others. He works at the bench or at a machine as they do, but is the executive of the group. The next step is the foreman, who may be in charge of as many as a hundred or more individuals. He does no bench work, he is not a producer, but devotes full time to his executive duties, to the keeping of records and to the handling of the personnel. The next step in many large organizations is the department head or superintendent or manager, who ordinarily does not come in direct contact with the workers, but handles them through his foremen. The final step is the major executive or official, the vice president or president of the organization.

These four executive ranks represent four degrees of success, in one sense in which that word is used. One is *advanced* from leading hand to foreman, from foreman to manager, from manager to president. As far as we can determine by measurements, the leading hand and the official have much the same inherent aptitudes. They differ primarily in vocabulary. Typical non-college-graduate shop foremen average, as a group, about as high as college graduates. Department heads score higher, roughly fifteen errors, and major executives the highest of all, averaging only seven errors. Whether the word 'executive' refers only to the major group or is used in the broader sense to mean anyone in charge of other workers, it is

still true that the executive scores higher than those under him and higher than other persons of similar age and education.

II

An interesting sidelight on the high vocabulary scores of executives is that they were unforeseen. When a scientist expects a result and finally achieves it there is always the feeling that, regardless of the care he has taken, personal bias may have entered. Six or eight years ago the Human Engineering Laboratories tested forty major executives of the Telephone Company who had offered themselves as victims to be experimented upon in a search for executive characteristics. At the same time the Laboratory was also revising the vocabulary test, not with the notion of using it with executives, but with the hope that it might prove of value in education. One day, with no thought of the consequences, I gave it to an executive, and from then on was asked for it regularly because of the interest it aroused. I paid little heed to the results until one day an executive refused to take the test. He had been obliged by lack of money to leave school at fourteen, and had earned his own living since. With no further formal education, he had worked his way to a major position. He had taken the aptitude test without hesitation, but vocabulary seemed to him so directly the result of schooling that he knew in advance he would fail. His own words were that he had made his way without being found out and he was not willing to give himself away. But in scientific work one cannot test only those who think they will do well, and we finally persuaded him to try the vocabulary test. He made two errors where the average college graduate makes twenty-seven.

Was it luck? Or was it significant of something which we had not recognized? The Laboratory listed the vocabulary scores of one hundred executives and, parallel with them, the scores of one hundred miscellaneous college graduates. The difference between the two arrays was striking. Only nine

per cent of the college graduates scored as high as the average major executive.

Why do large vocabularies characterize executives and possibly outstanding men and women in other fields? The final answer seems to be that words are the instruments by means of which men and women grasp the thoughts of others and with which they do much of their own thinking. They are the tools of thought.

Before accepting so far-reaching a conclusion several more obvious explanations must be examined and excluded. The first and most natural supposition is that successful persons acquire words with age and with the experience of life. Success does not usually occur early. The successful group were necessarily older in both years and experience than the general run of college graduates with whom they were compared; and their large vocabularies might be the inevitable result of age.

To probe this point a study of the growth of vocabulary with age was undertaken. From twelve, the earliest age for which we have a large number of measurements, to twenty-two or twenty-three vocabulary expands steadily and at a uniform rate. Through this school period the score on the vocabulary test of one hundred and fifty items improves five words a year. From twenty-three to fifty vocabulary continues to increase, but changes no more in these twenty-five years than in two school years — not enough to explain the high scores of executives. Normally, vocabulary is acquired early in life, before most men have made appreciable progress toward a responsible position. The large vocabularies of successful individuals come before success rather than after. Age and the experiences of life may contribute new words, but certainly do not explain in full the high vocabulary scores of business executives.

The next thought is that effective schooling may be the source both of a wide vocabulary and of executive success. It is known, from the work which the American Telephone and Telegraph Company has undertaken, that there is a relation-

ship between school success and business success later in life. Although not everyone who leads his class becomes a brilliant executive, and although not everyone who fails in school fails in life, in general school success preludes executive success. Schooling may be the vital factor of which the large vocabularies which we are measuring are but by-products.

To obtain evidence bearing on this point, we measured the vocabularies of twenty men who had left school at the age of fifteen and who had worked their way into major positions. They also averaged only seven errors. Their scores equaled those of the college-graduate executives. In the case of these twenty men it is their vocabularies which are important rather than their formal school education. Their large vocabularies are not the result of schooling and must, we therefore conclude, be significant for some other reason than as a by-product of an educational background.

Is, then, a college background of no importance? Has the non-college man the same chance of becoming an executive as has the college graduate? This fact seemed worth determining. Of the major executives in a large industrial organization, sixty per cent are college graduates, forty per cent non-college. At first glance, college would seem to have done little, for almost half are not college men. But, to be fair to education, there is another angle from which to view this result. Of the college graduates with this same company, more than three quarters are in executive positions, whereas, of the non-college men, well under a tenth are in similar positions. College graduates, in general, average measurably higher in vocabulary than do non-college persons. Furthermore, of the college group a significantly larger percentage are executives.

One would like to conclude without further preamble that the vocabularies of the college group are large because of directed effort and that these purposefully gained vocabularies have contributed to executive success. Non-college executives, then, are those rare individuals who pick up words so easily

that their vocabularies are large without effort. But there is one further possibility which must be investigated.

Although the vocabulary test was designed to measure knowledge which must have come through books or by word of mouth, a high score may reveal an underlying aptitude for language. It may be this flair which is the contributing factor in both vocabulary and success later in life.

It should be possible to isolate and measure diathesis apart from knowledge. We have worked on this approach for a number of years, thus far unproductively. For the time being we must leave the conclusion of this part of the research in abeyance and admit that the vocabularies of successful executives may reveal an aptitude.

III

Vocabularies may always be consciously increased regardless of the presence or absence of any gift. A knowledge of the meaning of each word at one's command must have been obtained by word of mouth or through reading, by some educational process.

Furthermore, with groups of individuals of apparently similar aptitudes, the amount of vocabulary added in a given period varies with different educational techniques. At Stevens Institute of Technology the freshman class is divided alphabetically into four sections. Each of these studies freshman English under a different member of the faculty. Four years ago the entire class took the vocabulary test the first week of freshman year. The four sections averaged about the same in vocabulary, and there was no reason to suppose that, selected as they were, one would score higher than another or have more ability. Yet, when remeasured nine months later, two of the sections had improved more than average academic freshmen, one section had improved only half this amount, and the fourth had retrogressed slightly.

The improvement of one section may have been due to the fact that the instructor was interested in the vocabulary

test and its implications. The important fact is that differences in vocabulary improvement were caused by differences in teaching techniques — in other words, that an improvement in vocabulary score can be produced by education.

Those boys and girls whom the Laboratory has measured and urged to better their vocabularies, and then remeasured at the end of two or three years, have shown more than average improvement. Here again vocabulary is induced independent of aptitude. It is for this reason that the Human Engineering Laboratories, in helping a youngster to find himself and start in the right direction, use a vocabulary test in lieu of a general intelligence test.

We come now to the question of whether or not that increment of vocabulary directly due to educational stimulation contributes to success. The four sections of the freshman class at Stevens Institute of Technology to which reference has been made, which took freshman English with different members of the faculty and improved different amounts in vocabulary, were followed to see the effect of these new vocabularies on school work the next year. The four sections averaged nearly the same in school marks freshman year. Sophomore year the two sections which had enlarged their vocabularies the previous year showed general gain in all school subjects—not strikingly, not enough to prove the point once and for all time, but enough to suggest that a vocabulary acquired consciously reflects in general school improvement the next year.

It is always possible that the improvement in school work was due to inspired teaching, to added incentive, but if this were true it would seem as if the improvement in school work should appear immediately freshman year, whereas it did not appear until sophomore year after the vocabulary had been acquired. This seems to indicate that it is the additional words themselves which are the tools used the next year, that words are important in and for themselves.

IV

Granted that diction is important, and many would agree without elaborate proof of the point, how, from the standpoint of the school, can it best be given; and, from that of the individual, how best achieved? Is it a knowledge of Latin and Greek which lays a sound foundation for a real understanding of words? Or is it constant reading? Or the assiduous perusal of the dictionary? Probably all contribute; as yet we have found no straight and easy road.

In the search for a road to vocabulary we have unearthed several facts which throw light on the learning process. One of these, which, if rightly interpreted, may prove to be of far-reaching importance to education, is that vocabulary advances with an almost unbroken front. The words at the command of an individual are not a miscellany gathered from hither and yon. With a very few exceptions they are all of the words in the dictionary up to those of an order of difficulty at which his vocabulary stops abruptly, and almost no words beyond. In the revised form of the test which is now available for school use, the items are arranged in order of difficulty as determined by actual test results. The first fifteen or twenty words of the test are known to the average high-school freshman or sophomore. The next thirty to forty are on the border line of his knowledge. Some he recognizes, others are vaguely familiar, and others he has not yet encountered. The balance are so far beyond him that he marks correctly no more than the one in five which he guesses by pure chance.

For convenience of scoring, the words are divided into ten groups of constantly increasing difficulty. One who knows the words of Group II, second in difficulty, almost invariably marks correctly every word of Group I. Another youngster who may know the words of, let us say, Group VI rarely fails on a single word in any of the first five easier groups. Similarly, one who fails on twelve of the fifteen words in any one

group — that is, marks correctly only the one word in five which he guesses — almost never knows a word in any more difficult group. There are not, as we had expected, stray words in the difficult part which one who fails earlier in the test has stumbled upon and remembered. These unusual words, if previously encountered as they must have been in reading and conversation, are too far beyond the point he has reached to make any lasting impression.

The one exception to this rule is the foreign student who may know difficult words because of their similarity to his own language, but miss much easier ones. Thus the Southern European often marks correctly such difficult words as *cephalic, garrulity,* and *piscatorial,* because of knowledge of Italian and French, but fails to know much easier words of Old English origin, such as, for instance, *knack, blotch,* and *cope.*

In the region where learning is taking place, the commonest error is the confusion of a word with its exact opposite. Among seventh- and eighth-grade and first-year high-school pupils, nearly a third mark *found guilty* as the correct meaning of *acquitted. Upright* is the most popular misconception for the meaning of *reclining;* and, strange as it may seem, *neat* is the commonest misconception of *untidy.* The seventh-grade youngster berated for keeping an untidy room quite often evidently receives the impression that he is too orderly. The failing is not limited to the high-school group. For *incontrovertible* the correct answer *indisputable* is usually marked by college men, but of the remaining four choices *unsound* is by far most popular. In the phrase 'You *allay* my fears,' — where the five choices are *justify, calm, arouse, increase,* and *confirm,* — *calm* is usually answered by the educated group, but *arouse* is next most popular. In the phrase 'He *retracts* his criticism,' *withdraws* is the correct answer and *repeats* is the most common delusion. In 'He *vented* his wrath,' *poured forth* is correct and *restrained* is the commonest misapprehension.

One need but turn to words of which one is not quite certain to see how difficult it is to distinguish opposites. One

evening at dinner with a delightful Dean of education, we fell to discussing this question. He recognized *cathode* and *anode* instantly as electrical terms designating the two poles, but hesitated a moment before saying which was which. *Port* and *starboard* he admitted he had never straightened out and resorted to some such phrase as 'Jack left port.' *Gee* and *haw* were beyond him. He surmised that they meant *up* and *down,* but said frankly he did not know the words. When told that they were used in ploughing, he was instantly interested, but did not care at all which was which. He was taking the first step in the learning process, placing them in their correct environment. The fifty-two per cent of college graduates who choose *invigorating* as the meaning of *enervating* are on the verge of knowing the word. The dictum of modern education, never to teach what a thing is not, has perhaps come from a realization of this confusion of opposites. The confusion seems, however, to be a natural step in the learning process.

V

In the study of human beings the factors involved are so numerous and so intertwined with one another that the experimenter, in unraveling the strands, must pause periodically to make certain that he is progressing. What then has been discovered? An exact and extensive vocabulary is an important concomitant of success. So much is known. Furthermore, such a vocabulary can be acquired. It increases as long as an individual remains in school or college, but without conscious effort does not change materially thereafter.

There may be some subtle distinction between a natural vocabulary picked up at home, at meals, and in reading, and one gained by a study of the dictionary. The latter may not be as valuable as the former. But there is nothing to show that it is harmful and the balance of evidence at the moment suggests that such a consciously, even laboriously, achieved vocabulary is an active asset.

VOCABULARY AND INTELLIGENCE

By

CECIL W. MANN

The development of a mental scale by Alfred Binet in 1905 marks the beginning of intelligence testing as we know it today, and his scale—the Binet-Simon Scale—is the prototype of the best modern scales for the measurement of general intelligence. Stimulated by the success of Binet, investigators in the United States and elsewhere developed and standardized mental scales appropriate to their cultural conditions. The success of the army group scales in 1917, when 1,750,000 army personnel were classified by the use of mental tests, led to the wide usage of tests in educational and industrial fields. The application of tests to educational, industrial, and military situations has yielded measures which have proved useful in educational classification, the selection of personnel, and in the diagnosis of mental defect. However, their wholesale application and interpretation by persons whose enthusiasm has often exceeded their wisdom has produced in the layman, and even in the college instructor, some measure of confusion and, not infrequently, an unfortunate degree of scepticism.

Justification for the use of tests for the measurement of intelligence would be more convincing to some if a suitable and universally agreed upon definition of intelligence could be found. There are some who argue that intelligence-testing should be postponed until the nature of intelligence is known. Such a position is untenable. The psychologist is, in some respects, not much worse off in the field of measurement than is the physicist. The latter is still unable to give a complete definition of the nature of electricity, yet the measurements of its functions are adequate in terms of the assumptions upon

which they are based. Moreover, through his attempts to measure electricity, incomplete though they be in some respects, the physicist is probably closer to a statement about the nature of electricity than he would be had he refused to use the limited possibilities of measurement available to him.

Some degree of confusion in the application of mental tests and in the interpretation of results is due to the nominative use of the term "intelligence". Such usage is probably a legacy of "faculty" psychology; terms such as "emotion", "idea", "thought", and "habit" are used as if they were entities instead of functions. Reification is common in all the sciences. The layman speaks of "force", "gravity", "weight", "magnetism", etc., as if they were entities or things; and he believes that the measurement of these is direct. Not so the physicist who is fully aware that most of his methods of measurement must employ inference. Thus, temperature is inferred from the length of a column of mercury; weight from the tension of a calibrated spring; electricity from the rotation of an armature; concentration of sugar in solution from the rotation of a beam of polarized light. The successful measurement of physical functions by the inferential method is sufficient justification for the application by the psychologist of the same method in the field of mental measurement. The intelligence test, then, is not a direct measurement of intelligence *qua* entity; it is the development of standardized conditions from which intelligence can be inferred from its manifestations in behavior.

Without adequate assumptive bases, success in measurement in any field, would depend upon happy accident. Eight decades of scientific research have proposed a number of assumptions with respect to intelligence. Ebbinghaus suggested that "intellectual ability consists in the elaboration of a whole into its worth and meaning by means of combination, correction and completion of numerous kindred relationships". Meumann suggested that intellectual ability is the "power of independent and creative elaboration of new products from

the psychic material provided by the senses". Binet, the originator of the modern intelligence test, believed that intelligent behavior is characterized by the ability to select and maintain a definite psychic direction, by the ability to make adaptations leading to a desired end, and by the ability to criticize one's own behavior. Spearman regarded intelligence as the ability to educe relationships and correlationships. In a symposium on intelligence in 1921, a number of psychologists contributed their views.[22] These phrases are common: ability to make good responses; capacity for abstract thinking; ability to adjust to the environment; ability to adapt to relatively new situations. Through these statements, there is a common thread of meaning. The power of creation and elaboration of wholes; the capacity for adaptation; the ability to handle abstractions; these are functions of the individual's apprehension of relationships. In every behavior response, the degree of success or failure will vary with the ability to educe relationships, whether the latter be concrete or abstract. The measure of intelligent behavior, then, will be the individual's successes or failures in the eduction, the apprehension, and the reconstruction of relationships. It should be clear that this is no definition of intelligence, but a description of its manifestations. It is based upon the assumption that there is a relationship between intelligence—whatever that may eventually prove to be—and behavior; and that observation of the latter under controlled conditions makes possible certain inferences with respect to the former.

If these assumptions be accepted, namely, that measures of intelligence are inferred from its manifestations, and that intelligent behavior is concomitant with ability to educe relationships, the plan of the intelligence test is plain. It is not possible to observe all of the behavior of all individuals, therefore the test constructor selects a sample of behavior items which are typical of the culture in which he proposes to use the test.

It has already been pointed out that intelligence tests,

measure, not intelligence as such, but its manifestations in behavior. It is clear that these manifestations will vary with the culture. The manifestation of intelligence at a given level in Samoa will vary greatly from the manifestation of intelligence at an equal level in Alaska. It is important to remember that samples of behavior items typical of one culture need not be typical of any other; therefore a test standardized on one culture may not be applied to individuals or groups in another culture unless it can be shown that the latter culture is in essential respects comparable to the former. This is equally true of differences within cultures, where these differences are sufficiently great. One could put little faith in results of an intelligence test standardized on a selected group of children from some privileged urban area when it is applied to a group of culturally underprivileged children in a remote rural area.

It would be unfortunate if the foregoing paragraph gave the impression that intelligence tests are but another form of scholastic aptitude test. Intelligence in any culture will manifest itself in directions which serve the needs of the individual. In those regions in which long periods of schooling are customary, the commonly educed relationships will obviously include, *inter alia,* much material which can be regarded as part of the products of schooling. It is equally true that there will be wide differences between individuals in that culture in respect of the amount of school material acquired and the speed with which it is acquired even when all have relative equal opportunity for education. Such differences will show up in the results of a well constructed intelligence test. From this point of view, the intelligence test is a comparing device; it compares the manifestations of the intelligence of an individual with that of the group of which he is a member. The intelligence scale is a relative measure; its unit of measurement is relative and not absolute. The intelligence quotient is a ratio of the mental age as measured by the test to the chronological age; it is the result of comparing the intelligence of the individual as manifested by his behavior under carefully controlled

conditions with that of a comparable group under similar conditions.

There is nothing unique in the method of using comparisons as a basis of measurement. Resistors, capacitances, temperatures and sound levels, to mention but a few, as measured by comparison. The extent to which intelligence tests will measure intelligent behavior will depend, however, upon the evaluation of the term 'measure'. If, by 'measure' is assumed a strict dichotomy into 'measure perfectly' and 'does not measure perfectly', then the psychologist will agree that tests do not measure perfectly. But no measuring device measures perfectly. There are errors of measurement in the most carefully designed and constructed physical measuring devices, such as barometers, thermometers, voltmeters and so on. These, however, are not discarded as worthless; they are used to measure and their results are interpreted in terms of their known errors of measurement. The psychologist has been able to develop statistical checks which enable him to compute errors of measurement, and interpret his results in terms thereof.

One manifestation of intelligence is the extent to which an individual can enter into verbal communication with others of his group. The evidence that has accumulated points to a positive correlation between intelligence test scores and size of vocabulary. Terman and Merrill[19] state that "it (the vocabulary test) agrees to a high degree with the mental age rating on the scale as a whole; correlations for single age groups range from .65 to .91 with an average of .81". In his careful statistical analysis of the Stanford-Binet Scale — one of the best of the individual intelligence tests — McNemar[13] states that the "magnitude of these correlations (between vocabulary test scores and the total mental age scores) indicates that the vocabulary test alone constitutes a good rough measure of intelligence". Wechsler[20] found that "the correlation . . . (between the vocabulary test scores and the total score) on the rest of the scale is .85". The relationship between intelligence score and vocabulary score is significant, but it is not perfect.

If it were, the mathematical value would be —1.00 or +1.00. Using the average value of .81 it is possible to state that while the intelligence test score and the vocabulary test score are related, no less than 58% of the total variables which determine the total intelligence test score are unaccounted for. Psychologists have recognized the value of the vocabulary test in a scale of intelligence, and they have not been unmindful of its limitations. For this reason they have included tests which do not depend upon vocabulary in the hope that by this means they would include some of the variables not included by the use of the vocabulary test.

Further circumstantial evidence on the relationship between mental function and vocabulary comes from some of the investigations concerned with mental deterioration.[1, 5] The evidence is sufficiently impressive to warrant the use of functional vocabulary as at least one of the measures for the discrimination of mental deterioration.

It should be emphasized that the psychologists who employs the vocabulary test is interested primarily in functional language. His interest is not in the bare skeletal aspect of words, but in their relational values. Terman and Merrill[19] insist that "it is important for the examiner to realize that the purpose of this vocabulary test is to determine whether the subject knows the meaning of the word, not whether he can give a completely logical definition". It should be noted that in some tests, partial credits are given in accordance with the richness of the meaning expressed by the subject. The psychologist in his construction and use of the vocabulary test eschews the test which requires simple recall of dictionary meaning in favor of the one in which the subject is required to manifest intelligence through his comprehension of the relationship of the word as used in a meaningful language situation.

Sufficient evidence has accumulated to demonstrate that intelligence is manifested in the use of functional language, and that vocabulary — qualitatively and quantitatively — is one important measure of intelligence. The acceptance of this

premise does not justify the acceptance of its converse, namely, that by increasing vocabulary one may increase intelligence. This latter statement may be the result of faulty interpretation of the coefficient of correlation. There is a correlation of approximately .85 between vocabulary test scores and total intelligence test scores. The mathematical concept, coefficient of correlation, may be interpreted as a mathematical measure of relationship, but it contains no warranty for assuming *causal* relationship. Which of the correlated measures is cause and which effect is a matter for logic and not mathematics. The psychologist does not claim that success in college and life is causally related to size of vocabulary; to do so would be to fall victim of the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy. What he does claim, however, is that both richness of vocabulary and success in college and life are manifestations of the intellectual level of the individual; there is a concomitant but not causal relationship between richness of vocabulary and success, not because a vocabulary makes inevitably for success, but because both vocabulary and success are possible only in those individuals in whom there is the necessary genetic basis for a high level of intelligence.

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IDLE FEARS ABOUT BASIC ENGLISH

By

I. A. RICHARDS

To liken so spare a frame as Basic English to Falstaff may seem odd. But they have points in common. "Men of all sorts," he says, "take a pride to gird at me. . . . I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men." (2 Henry IV, 1, 2, 11) Men (and women) of all sorts take a pride to gird at Basic. The pride is often conspicuous.

Basic is a great excitant of humor. Hardly a week passes but the *New Yorker* or *Punch* or now Miss Macaulay, in the April, 1944, *Atlantic,* finds Basic irresistible. And I imagine that Mr. Ogden—himself a man of resource in jokes—gains deep satisfaction from this. To have provided, in this distressed world, a new and seemingly inexhaustible recipe for humor is in itself no slight achievement. But there are other sides to Basic. This distressed world needs jokes; but it needs greater helps still more. And Basic offers them. It would be a pity if the humorists, through misapprehensions or malice, were to hinder the understanding and use of these helps just when they are most urgently needed. Let us see what these helps are. Miss Macaulay rightly takes up "the use of a common tongue by foreigners among themselves" first. There are some 220 million people who have a good knowledge of English; and these form an invaluable stabilizing and teaching reserve which artificial languages lack; but there are over 1900 million of the others. And they talk some 1700 tongues. No man knows how many of these people are soon going to be flung suddenly into new international contacts. We are far more likely to underrate than to overestimate what the Air Age is about to do for us, and English of some sort or other will certainly

have to be the operating language of the airways — with all that that implies. Is it to be Broken English or Basic English? That is really the question. A form of English which is a barrier, or a smooth and solid runway? Those who have heard Cantonese and North Chinese, for example, using English as their bridge will not think "international understanding between foreigners" through Basic so remote an ideal. It is true that Basic is short in terms of abuse, in irritants and insults. But is that a disadvantage?

Now as to talk between English-speakers and the rest, Miss Macaulay claims to "have no wish to make elementary jests on this subject." If so, she must be somewhat at the mercy of her unconscious, for she does little else. Of course if the foreign learner knew English perfectly, things would be easier for him and for us. If he knew *really well* the current English Miss Macaulay would put in a phrase book for him, we would escape a little trouble, but at what cost to him? Learning to keep sufficiently within Basic is really a very light task for an English-speaker. Learning to talk full contemporary idiom — whether American or British — is an appallingly heavy undertaking for almost any foreigner.

Miss Macaulay has unfortunately not concerned herself with this key question and a key fact. She has been too busy passing judgment on what is or is not good English — usually a thought-free process — and shuddering at the possibilities of change. "The mind is ever ingenious in making its own distress," as Goldsmith noted. And she seems to regard "a laborsaving short cut" as a minor matter here. If she were to consider this key question and the key fact, she would find that Basic, far from being a danger, is a much needed protection to English.

The key question is, "Which is easier for the foreigner: to attain some general competence in English with Basic, or with the miscellaneous assortments of common phrases that have passed for elementary English?" And the key fact is that the foreigner gets much further in his command of *correct*

English with Basic than through any other plan of study of comparable scale. He goes on from Basic, if he wants to, with a flying start.

Basic offends Miss Macaulay's feeling for her own English. She does not like it. Perhaps she likes scrambled English better? If she had sat through more classes in elementary English she would be better placed to judge. Or if she had taught English literature to representative foreign products of six years' hard labor at Miss Macaulay's English. She is attached to her *shall* and *should* — an ambiguous, insecure, recent, and regional development of English which can cause much misunderstanding. How confident she is that use of *will* where she would write *shall* is a "corruption" of English.

This is the arbitrary attitude to language, ignoring alike the variations in the uses of these words made by equally discerning speakers, the confusions which are the only crop to be expected from attempts to teach such distinctions in *elementary* English, and the linguistic research of a hundred years. It well illustrates the source of Miss Macaulay's angry and apprehensive feeling about Basic. They come from secluded, entrenched, and unexamined ideas about usage. After the disturbance *Basic English and Its Uses* has evidently caused her, I hesitate to refer her to *Interpretation in Teaching* for a fuller discussion of usage. She may prefer the linguistic ivory tower.

II

Here I must take care to be clear. Basic is no enemy to usage (critically examined). At countless points it is governed (and as strictly as any English) by usage. It does not pretend — how could any *limited* selection of English do so? — that its usages are the best or superior to other usages which those who know more English would follow. But to keep Basic as normal a form of English as possible — under the terrific hammerings a language gets from foreign learners — Mr. Ogden had to select the most important key patterns on which to insist. To try for too much leads in practice to less success —

to greater deviation from Standard English—unless we assume that the foreigner is going to devote years of toil to polishing his English under far better teachers than are ever likely to be generally available.

I remark in Miss Macaulay a noteworthy absence of constructive thought here. The rapid spread of English is going anyhow to lead to a great deal of queer lingo. We in America and Canada have more than a little experience of this. We know, and the Armed Forces know too, what the crippling effect of widespread broken English is. Miss Macaulay writes as a member of a highly literate elite. She does not face the present fact that a dauntingly large proportion of nominal English-speakers are without adequate means either of expressing their thought or understanding the thoughts of others on any but a narrow range of the most familiar subjects.

Basic, we are finding, can help them greatly. It is easy to denounce "a stunted barbarian vocabulary." That needs only a pen and a consciousness of superior cultivation. To go into the classrooms and observe the actual effects of Basic in releasing minds from stultifying confusions is more trouble. It is well to point to "our already deplorable use of our native tongue, threatened and debased on all sides by jargon, wrong constructions, solecisms, genteelisms, parvenu pronunciations" —though I wonder a little whether Miss Macaulay really knows how far such things have gone. But merely to list them does little good. What has been shown is that Basic can be a useful remedy where more traditional remedies are failing.

Mr. Ogden had to strike a balance. No form of widely useful English which could be generally learned *in a reasonable time* could avoid some shocks to routine minds. His task was to prevent serious distortion of English without sacrificing ease, economy of vocabulary, and the widest utility. In any case, if English-speakers are to talk at all to those whose English is limited, they must make concessions and adapt their speech to their hearers. What does Miss Macaulay propose? That we should all learn all the major languages? Or that we should

shut ourselves up for fear of damage to our English? Language is, after all, a tool which we use variously for various purposes, and Basic is a special use, no more. Exclusive language custom priding itself on being "the only good English" is an amusing spectacle. But it can be a nuisance when it gets in the way of science, critical judgment, teaching, world collaboration, or constructive statesmanship.

Whimsicality, I suppose, is irresponsible in all these directions. And literary quirks will not much affect men of practical judgment who had, for example, the Chinese Air Force to train and saved lives by doing it through Basic. But when Miss Macaulay charges Basic with misleading interpretation, a reply is needed. Her two instances concern *angel* and *virgin.* She says that the Basic-taught child will be confusing an angel with wasps and sparrows because his Basic dictionary tells him it is a "being with wings." Actually his *General Basic Dictionary* gives this: "(Sp. in Christian religion) higher being, servant of Higher Power, gen. pictured as winged." Miss Macaulay has consulted only the little preliminary handbook for translators, in spite of Mr. Ogden's warning foreword. That is hardly fair play. As to *virgin,* the translators of *The New Testament in Basic English* were not, of course, re-writing the King James Version; they were making a new translation and *an unmarried woman* is closer to the Hebrew used by the prophet than *virgin* would be. Miss Macaulay's sneers here somewhat recoil upon herself.

In all this, however, she is indulging in a fly's-eye view of a mountain. Here is an immense contribution towards a more sanely organized world, a tested and proved means for making the coming diffusion of English give rise to as little strain and distortion as possible. This diffusion is inevitable, whoever wishes it or not; the war has seen to that; it is occurring already. All that Miss Macaulay has to offer as comment are sundry examples of the obvious fact that no limited form of English can do everything to satisfy all critics, and some doleful prophecies which sadly contradict one another.

In these she little cares how she shifts her ground. First, Basic won't work because the English-speaker can't understand (!) or speak it. Next, everybody will come to speak it so well they will speak nothing else. They "will pick it up almost unconsciously." But why should any of us become limited to Basic? Who doesn't already speak many forms of English — in the classroom, on the playground; at home and in the office; drunk and sober; in the army and out of it? Teachers, nurses, parents, who daily restrict their language far more drastically than Basic would, don't lose the rest of it. Finally the foreigner — through Basic — comes to "conversing, reading, and writing in excellent English" while we go "down the ladder rung by rung. So great cultures go under, change hands." The bland patriotic assumption that of course the great culture is ours will amuse the foreigner. The prophet-critic has changed camps again.

Miss Macaulay is a satirist. Her readers expect her to wave a witty whip. Often in the past she has attacked foibles, prejudices, and other modes of folly to good effect. But there she knew intimately what she was attacking. Guesses about what may happen are not a safe substitute. Basic is a tempting field for such guesses. Comparatively few people, as yet, have the actual experience which alone shows what it can and will do. I do not for one moment suggest that Miss Macaulay thought, "Here is a big new subject to go for. Everybody is interested and naturally suspicious. It is easy game." Oh, no. She is Horatia at the bridge or at least among the geese in the Capitol. But to one of her readers it was a disappointment to see her talent go astray for lack of inquiry into what is actually happening.

One culminating instance: "The scheme," she says, ". . . is clear: they want the thing taught in English schools." I do not know of any who want Basic taught (as opposed to studied) in normal English or American classes. For the deaf and the blind, yes. And I have seen retarded readers, who would have had to leave school with a complete reading failure

against them, turned into sound and fluent readers in five months through Basic. But no one is proposing to have Basic taught — as a first stage or as any stage — to normal English-speaking children. "Taught" here is one of those compact ambiguous words beloved by controversialists which Miss Macaulay favors. It calls up horrid pictures of helpless children being drilled in Basic phrases to the neglect of the rest of their English. But this "scheme" which is so "clear" to her is just non-existent.

A good number of people have found that Basic, as a paraphrasing instrument, has its uses. It can awaken interest in the resources of full English and the Basic words themselves. It provides some of the exercise and discipline which Latin translation at its best can give. So used, it already looks like part of the answer to many a current problem in teaching technique. And were they substantial, Basic could readily handle the dangers conjured up by Miss Macaulay's idle fears.

ONE WORD LEADS TO ANOTHER

By

JOSEPH T. SHIPLEY

In the beginning of many discussions of diction, we are reminded that in the beginning was the word. Just what it will come to has not yet been told; not merely of words do we hear it lamented but of making many books, there is no end. In between is the growth of language, the history of mankind.

World War II was a war of words as well as machines. Pamphlets were often dropped before bombs. So that power might be theirs, long before blood was shed, totalitarian states were using words as weapons, were striking with less material missiles than sticks and stones. Methods of propaganda analysis were contrariwise propagated, seeking to uncover in words more sinister functions than to convey clear, cold sense. The concern with words, which seeped into popular interest in "crossword" puzzles and questions for "quiz" programs, reawakened the science of semantics, which deals with the meanings words may bear. One thriving offshoot of this study, "general semantics", finds in the misunderstanding and misuse of words the cause of most of the evils of our time, from ulcers and broken homes to anti-Semitism and the cataclysm that has threatened to engulf the world.

Without venturing upon the troubled seas of such speculation, we may more moderately observe that within words themselves much hidden wisdom lies. A word is a storehouse of human history. Knowledge of the shifts in sense a word has undergone opens a vista of spreading civilization.

Consideration of the word *pluck,* for example, shows that —despite Marx and Freud, despite robot-makers and tamperers with hormones — human nature changes, if at all, but slowly.

Folk physiology associated emotions with bodily organs: love with the heart; courage with the viscera ("intestinal fortitude"). And about a century ago *pluck* — the *pluck* was the part of the fowl a farmer would reach in and pluck forth — came to be used as a slang term for courage. The term won popularity; the new sense supplanted the old. And now, when a speaker seeks anew a vivid term, in defiance of the doctors he plunges right back into the viscera and exclaims "That guy's got *guts!*" [Folk physiology doubtless bears a grain of fact, for the scores of popular songs that sentimentally link heart ("Sweetheart") and fond affection cannot wipe away the truth, as many a soldier will avouch, of the biblical remark 'His bowels were loosed with fear'.]

Other tendencies of human nature are manifest in such folk shiftings. *Humor* originally meant moisture (as still in *humidity*) — not because one laughs until one cries! Four bodily *humors,* fluids, were supposed to determine a man's temperament; hence our adjectives *splenetic, bilious, sanguine, choleric.* A melancholy person was one with an abundance of black bile. But men are careless: not that a thousand-legger has that many legs, but that we do not bother to count. Thus words that signify an entire scale or range of meaning tend to slide toward one end of that scale. And *humor,* which first meant fluid, then fluid as determining disposition, then disposition, moved genially to its present *sense of humor.* A slide in the opposite direction was taken by *temper,* which first meant temperament; but now we seek to avoid a man that has a *temper.*

That the cynic slide is the more usual we may judge from the history of *prevent.* This originally meant to come before; users of the Book of Common Prayer used to beseech the Lord to "*prevent* me in all my doings". Come before me and prepare the way. That is the Lord's way; but in the greedier press of man's affairs, he that comes before is likely to take all that's to be had, thus to *prevent* other profiting. The word lapsed with human practice.

While man goes down, however, he likes to dress himself up. The word *melancholy* reminds us of the scholastic adornment of German names. Thus the scholar *Schwartzert* translated himself into the Greek *Melanchthon* (the second element of this name appears in the English adjective *autochthonous*); *Gerhard* took both Latin and Greek to become *Desiderius Erasmus;* the *Fischer* family is represented today by a stage director and drama-teacher named *Piscator.*

This process is by no means confined to names. It may result from the effort of the *nouveau-riche* to appear *comme il faut* and quite *au courant;* thus, in the Renaissance, good English *rimes* were furbished forth as though the Greeks had spelled them: *rhymes.* In the same way, the *controller* that has taken his place by a long course through Norman French was brought back to his Latin, made *comptroller* of the court's moneys. *Advantage* and *advertise* had the *d* tucked in; and early English *avoutrie* was relatinized to modern *adultery* (from Latin *ad alter,* to another). Today, the estimable *physician* has his repute snatched at by the *mortician* and the *beautician;* or the *beauty-parlor* (itself a "high toned" word) is further adorned as the *cosmetarium.* The dressing up may, however, spring from a desire to avoid direct mention of an unpleasant fact. Such euphemism is deep-rooted in animistic fears, but persists beyond conscious superstition. The word *cemetery* first meant a sleeping-peace; we speak of the *deceased* as having 'gone to his last rest'.

Shifting of word-meaning often leaves strange residue. By traveling into English through various lands, one Latin word may reach us in several forms, Thus *piazza* comes via Italy; *plaza,* from Spain; *place,* through France. *Regal* is direct from the Romans; the Normans have made it *royal.* Or a word may take divergent courses, so that different forms bear different meanings. Originally, for an instance, there was a close bond between to *gnaw* and to *know* (Latin *gnoscere,* to know; English *recognition*). This has been loosened; yet elsewhere the bond persists. A *ruminant* animal chews its cud; a thoughtful

person *ruminates*. Shakespeare unites the senses when he exclaims: "Chew upon this." But the most curious of these developments is that in which two contrasted words have coalesced in one form, so that a word means its own opposite. Thus a *fast* color does not run, whereas a *fast* horse runs swiftly. To *cleave* means to cling tightly together, and to cut clean apart. The story of *unbending* shows how manners alter meaning. In the days of archers, when the taut cord was slipped from the bow, *unbending* implied a man gracious, with a touch of charm. But bowmen gave way before gunners, and a man *unbending* presented a different image, stiff as a ramrod.

Thus not only physiology and psychology, but more martial aspects of history, lurk within our words. When the Romans invaded Britain, they pitched many camps. The Latin *castra,* camp, lingers in English names, varying with the locality as *-cester, -caster, -chester.* Thus *Westchester* was the west camp. The Saxon name for a county was *shire;* with an early native name, we have three epochs of English history recorded in *Worcestershire,* known in America chiefly as the name of a sauce. In Scott's *Ivanhoe,* the jester points out to the swineherd that while the animal is alive and must be tended, it is Saxon *bull, calf, pig;* but it is served at the lord's table as good Norman *beef, veal, pork.*

Sociology is in the onion of other words. There was probably a duty on figs in ancient Greece; a man that wished to curry favor with the authorities might whisper: "Go down to the shore beyond Calchos' at dusk tomorrow, and you'll find a boat-load. . . ." He was a *fig-shower,* which is the meaning of *sycophant.* Thus today, the lad that brings a big bright delicious for teacher is an *apple-shiner;* his elder of a century ago was (and still may be) a *bootlicker.*

Economics plays its part, as may be seen through the word *silly,* which once (like German *selig*) meant blessed. To the Saxons, the Norman overlords were blessed, *silly*: they had nothing to do but enjoy themselves all day. Thus *silly* came to mean not busy, idle; Coleridge speaks of "the *silly* buckets

on the deck", because there was no rainwater for them to hold. Something of the coming change may be glimpsed in his use; for with the eighteenth century came a growing sense of the dignity of labor, and with the industrial revolution came jobs aplenty; thus a person that was idle was likely to be a bit foolish; and *silly* acquired its present force. Through the same impulses the word *busy* moved in a converse direction: meaning active, it was in Old English applied to the passions; then, as still surviving in *busybody;* then with a sense of value, as we use it now. A more neutral application remains in the school expression *busy work,* activity to keep the children out of mischief while the teacher tends to other concerns.

These processes, of course, are going on continuously, within all our words. What new wine will be poured from our old bottles, we can scarcely prophesy. Semantic shifts are gradual, as the mores change. More obvious movements of the language, however, can be noted in certain fields; and certain methods of word formation can be observed in action.

Where science establishes new ranges of knowledge, industry new articles of use, politics new orders of organization, words must be found for their labels. Many of these have been drawn from the names of persons instrumental: *watt, volt, ohm* and its converse *mho. Silhouette* was a French treasurer so parsimonious that he would buy only outline drawings. *Winchester* reminds us that the largest cannon of World War I was named after the manufacturer's wife, *Big Bertha* Krupp; but the still earlier *gun* also wears a pet name, derived from *Gunhilda.* The *zeppelin,* too, (from the Count von Zeppelin) shows that these words leap language limitations; as do the adjectives bequeathed us by the Roman gods — masquerading as planets for the astrologers' reading: *mercurial, jovial, saturnine.*

From other tongues, indeed, many words at all times have come into our receptive language. *Garage* and *chauffeur* (which meant heater, stoker) we owe the French; but we have paid the debt with other words: *biftek* (beefsteak), *bouledogue*

(bulldog), *gratte-ciel* (a literal translation of skyscraper). Recently *tycoons* have been prominent in the gossip-columns of magazines; also from the Japanese the present War has emphasized the *nisei* (second generation) in this land.

Borrowing is perhaps less common, however, than re-adaptation of native words. With these, two opposite processes may be observed in constant play. Some words are built up, others are broken down.

The breakneck speed of reckless motorists is in a sense akin to the dash of the columnists into verbal novelties, seeking to sparkle, if not to startle, with innovations. Our language, while it does not emulate the German sesquipedalian formation of polysyllables, is rich in picturesque compounds: *joyride, hayseed, pantywaist, sobstuff, icebox, shut-eye, happy-go-lucky, jitterbug* — in a score of fields of living. The columnist, driven to desperate punning, as when a couple seeking a divorce at Reno, Nevada, is referred to as *Renovating,* is in this respect far feebler than the folk.

Especially does the weakness of the would-be word coiner reveal itself with imitative sounds. Thus, to indicate the collapse of a project (like a punctured balloon), the columnist declares that it has *pfft.* Compare this to the folk expression of surprise, of the open mouth 'struck dumb': *ba.* The verbs, Latin *badare,* French *bayer,* to gape, picture the open mouth. But we may consider either the sound itself, whence we reach the *baa* of sheep and the *baying* of hounds; or we may look upon the gap, the opening, and arrive at the *bay* window and the Back *Bay* of Boston. From the same imitative source, via Old French *esbaïr, esbaïss-,* to make gape, comes English *bashful.* You see what happens when you open your mouth!

While many words are thus formed by addition, others are created by processes of condensation. Your *dinner* (which indeed once was *breakfast*) is such a word. When the lord awoke (usually about noon), he *broke* his *fast* with a hearty meal. The Late Latin form *disjejunare,* from which French *diner,* to *dine,* was contracted, is formed of *dis-,* away, and

jejunare, to fast. (English *jejune* meant starving, hence thin, insubstantial.) The common man rises earlier; but *breaking* one's *fast* — breakfast — in French is still *déjeuner.* Our own times afford many examples of shortening; thus when a man shouts *"Taxi!"* he is really calling for a *taximetercabriolet*: a little wagon that leaps (jounces) like a goat, with a device for measuring its activity.

More sudden methods of condensation are telescoping, and the forming of a word from the initial parts of an expression. Telescoping, the pressing of words together (as *chortle,* from *chuckle* and *snort*) is the trick of the verbal experimenter, from *Jabberwocky* to Joyce (whom some called jabber-wacky!). Thus Joyce's *viterberation* seeks to pack together the name-calling and the noise of a quarrel; as his *Joepeter* at once summons the god and tumbles him off Olympus. The shortening of expressions into words — though commercially a conscious device, as with *Nabisco* and *Socony* — is a more natural, more frequently folk, practice. *Nazi* is an abbreviation of *NAtionalsoZIalistiche; Gestapo,* of *GEheime STAatsPOlizei,* secret state police; *flak,* of *FLiegerAbwehrKanone,* aircraft defence cannon (fire). In English directing, we have deducted *radar* from *RAdio Directing And Range-finding,* and the army's frequent *snafu* from (in parlor parlance) *Situation Normal, All Fouled Up.* Other contractions range the alphabet from soup to nuts.

In the course of language change, as new words come and old ones take new meanings, some fall by the way. A few of these leave notable gaps, and one might wish for the power — as of *anacampserote*: that which brings back departed love! — to summon them from faded tomes into current usage. Thus the American politics of the days of James K. Polk drew, from the title of a campaign satire, a word for a trumped-up rumor, a *roorback,* again familiar in practice if not in name. Many old English words, obsolescent in his day, were given fresh virtue by Sir Walter Scott; our time has found no such refurbisher.

Language remains, nonetheless, man's most useful instrument. The claim that it distinguishes man from the beast is not wholly true, save in his command of the linguistic tool: the fluidity and complexity of his manipulation combined with his comprehension of its symbols and its functions. For good or for evil, words are weapons, words are the implements of command. He that would use them potently — whether as philosopher or as warrior to sway the sphere — will discern within language a history of mankind. All paths are strewn, but all paths are hewn, with words.

DESIGNATIONS FOR COLORED FOLK

By

H. L. MENCKEN

When the New York *Times* announced in an editorial on March 7, 1930, that it would capitalize the word *Negro* thereafter, there were loud hosannahs from the Aframerican intelligentsia, for (with an exception to be noted) they seemed to be convinced that lifting the word out of lower case would also give a leg up to its bearers. The decision of the *Times* was inspired, according to its own account by Major Robert Russa Moton, then principal of Tuskegee Institute, but he was by no means the originator of the movement, nor was the *Times* the first American newspaper to yield. The true pioneer seems to have been Lester Aglar Watson, a colored journalist hailing from St. Louis, who, after a varied career on both Negro and white newspapers, was made minister to Liberia in 1935. 'In 1913,' he says of himself in *Who's Who in America,* 'with coöperation of Associated Press, started movement for capitalization of *N* in *Negro.*' He does not give the name of the first newspaper to be fetched, but by the time the *Times* succumbed there were already some important ones in his corral—among them, the New York *World, Herald Tribune* and *Telegram,* the Chicago *Herald-Examiner* (Hearst), the *Christian Science Monitor* of Boston, the Springfield (Mass.) *Republican,* and the Brooklyn *Eagle.* Moreover, he had made some converts in the South, even in the Deep South—for example, the Montgomery (Ala.) *Advertiser* (then edited by the late Grover Hall), the Durham (N. C.) *Sun,* and the Columbus (Ga.) *Ledger.* Yet more, he had persuaded a number of national magazines, including the *Atlantic Monthly,* the *Nation,* the *New Republic,* the *American Mercury,* and *Time.* Finally, he

had rounded up several government agencies—for example, the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Education and the whole Department of Commerce. But the surrender of the *Times* was hailed as a crucial victory in the long war, and when it was followed three years later by that of the Style Manual of the Government Printing Office, which sets the style for the *Congressional Record* and is generally followed by other government publications, there was a renewal of the rejoicing.

The one dissentient was George S. Schuyler, columnist since 1924 for the Pittsburgh *Courier,* contributor to many white magazines, author of 'Black-No-More,' father of the *Wunderkind,* Philippa Schuyler, and the best Negro journalist, and by long odds, ever heard of. On March 15, 1930, only a week after the *Times* had come into camp, he broke out in the *Courier* with the following:

> It really doesn't matter a tinker's damn whether *Negro* is spelled with a small or large *N,* so far as the Negro's economic, political and cultural status is concerned. The gabble, mostly senseless, to the contrary has vastly amused me; for, if anything, it is worse to spell *Negro* with a large *N* than with a small one, and if I had my way I would discontinue it. . . .
>
> The truth is that the American Negro is an amalgam of Caucasian, Amerindian and African, there being but 20 per cent. 'pure,' and those are the only ones entitled to the term *Negro* when used as a descriptive adjective. Geographically, we are neither Ethiopians or Africans, but Americans. Culturally, we are Anglo-Saxons.
>
> Used as a noun, the term is therefore a designation of a definite social caste, an under-dog, semi-serf class which believes it is dignifying its status by a capitalization of the term by which it is called and recognized. This is the same thing as arguing that an imbecile is somewhat ennobled by spelling the word with a capital *I* or that a convict has his status improved by spelling the word with a capital *C.* Lifting *Negro* from the lower case to the upper typographically does not in the least elevate him socially. As a matter of fact, it fits right in with the program of racial segregation. As *negroes* we are about 3,000,000 strong, as *Negroes* we are 12,000,000 strong; as *negroes* we are a definite physical type, as *Negroes* we are a definite social class. It is significant that Southern newspapers and magazines were more ready and willing to make the change in *Negro* than the Northern publica-

tions. The former are ever eager to make the Negro satisfied with his place; the latter based their objections on etymological and grammatical grounds. . . .

The possession of physical characteristics or ancestry different from other people by any citizen should not be constantly emphasized and brought to the attention of newspaper readers, especially in this country. The interests of interracial peace demand the abolition of such references and we ought to fight for that and lose no time trying to get white folks to 'dignify' a socio-chromatic caste system established and maintained by them for their own convenience and economic advantage. There is something ridiculous about a so-called *Negro* bellowing against color discrimination and segregation while wearing out his larynx whining for a glorification of his Jim Crow status in society through capitalization of the *N* in *Negro.*

Mr. Schuyler returned to the subject many times afterward. Thus on July 17, 1937:

Negro clearly belongs with *blonde, brunette, ruddy, mulatto, octoroon* and such descriptive terms, and has no stronger claim on capitalization. . . . Capitalized, it sends to bolster the *status quo,* and thus is at best conservative and at worst reactionary, for it discourages differentiation and strengthens the superstition that 'all coons are alike.'

And again on March 20, 1943:

Negro is either an adjective meaning black or it is a caste name like *Sudra.* When we eagerly accept it as a group designation, regardless of our skin tint, we are accepting all the 'racial' nonsense of Hitler, Bilbo, and the myriads who believe as they do — at least in the day time.

But Mr. Schuyler's iconoclastic position got no support from the general run of American colored folk, nor from their accepted fuglemen and haruspices. Even so generally nonconforming a spokesman of the race as the late Dr. Kelly Miller was moved, in 1937, to argue for *Negro* in *Opportunity,* the organ of the National Urban League:[1]

A printed list consisting of Englishmen, Germans, Italians, Jews and *negroes* would evidently be a case of unexplained typographical discrimination. If it be said that *Negro* is not derived from a country

or geographical division, as other racial designations are, an adequate rejoinder would be that neither is *Jew*.[2]

In the first days of slavery, Dr. Miller said, the slaves were called simply *blacks,* and even after interbreeding lightened their color the term continued in use 'in a generic sense.' Then came *African,* which 'was accepted by the race in the early years, after it first came to self-consciousness,' and still survives in the titles of some of its religious organizations, *e.g.,* the *African* Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. (This, according to the *Dictionary of American English,* was during the first half of the Eighteenth Century.) A bit later *darky* or *darkey* began to be used, and 'at first it carried no invidious implication.' (The *DAE's* first example is dated 1775.) Then came *Afrıco-American* (1835 or thereabout), but it was too clumsy to be adopted.[3] After the Civil War *freedman* was in wide use, but it began to die out before the end of the 70's.[4] In 1880 *Afro-American* was invented by T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the New York *Age,* and it still survives, but only in rather formal usage.[5] 'Mr. Fortune,' said Dr. Miller, 'repudiated the word *Negro* because of the historical degradation and humiliation attached to it.' At some undetermined time after 1900 Sir Harry Johnston, the English African explorer and colonial administrator, shortened *Afro-American* to *Aframerican,* but the latter has had but little vogue.[6] After rehearsing, in his article, the history of all these appellations, Dr. Miller turned to *Negro* and *colored,* and proceeded to discuss their respective claims to general adoption. The latter, he concluded, could not qualify, for it was properly applicable to any person not white, including Chinese, Japanese, Indians and Mexicans, and had been so applied in various State laws, and even, at least by inference, in Federal population statistics.[7] Thus his reasoning:

> Try, if you will, to express the idea involved in *Negro* art, *Negro* music, *Negro* poetry, *Negro* genius, the *Journal of Negro History,* the *Journal of Negro Education* and the *Negro Handbook* in terms of the word *colored* and see what a lamentable weakness would result from

this substitution. . . . The term *Negro is* far superior to the term *colored* in grammatical inflection, for it may be used either as a noun or as an adjective, whereas *colored* has no nominal equivalent. Unlike the words *black* and *white,* it does not pluralize into a noun. . . . The word *people, race* or *persons* must be added to give collective or plural effect. . . . This handicap is seen in the possessive case. . . . Again, the word *Negro* may be easily inflected into *Negroid* by adding the Greek ending *-oid,* which implies likeness or resemblance to. This term may be used either as a noun or an adjective, and forms an apt designation of the derivatives of African blood now scattered through the world.

Dr. Miller admitted that 'such terms as *colored lady, colored gentleman* and *colored society*' sounded 'more polite than the corresponding *Negro* equivalents,' but argued that the preference for them probably grew out of 'that to which the ear is accustomed.' He went on:

Many of the off-colored group object to the term *Negro* because it serves as a reminder of the humiliation and degradation through which the race has passed. The fact that *Negro* is now used to describe the group does not indicate any lesser degree of appreciation or esteem. . . . Any race or group, in the long run, will derive its reputation from its character and worth, and not from the appellation by which it is known. . . . Sensitiveness about a name is always a sign of the inferiority complex.

Dr. Miller, going further than most other advocates of *Negro,* was also willing to accept *Negress,* which is intolerably offensive to most high-toned colored folk. Here the iconoclastic Schuyler agreed with him, saying,

If we accept the term *Negro* there is no sound reason for spurning *Negress,* and yet its use is discouraged and condemned without, of course, any sensible argument being advanced for this position. I understand Jews are similarly unreasonable about the term *Jewess.*[8]

But despite this agreement of two high Negro authorities, the *Atlantic Monthly* got into hot water when, in October, 1935, it used *Negress* in an editorial reference to a colored contributor, Miss Juanita Harrison, author of a serial entitled 'My

Great, Wide, Beautiful World,' Moreover, it added to its offense by speaking of the lady by her given name alone, without the *Miss*.[9] Protests came in promptly, and one of them, from Isadore Cecilia Williams, of Washington, was printed in the issue for December, along with an editorial explanation. I take the following from Miss (or Mrs.?) Williams's letter:

> *Negress* . . . is obnoxious to Negroes chiefly because of the sordid, loose, and often degrading connotations it has been forced to carry. From the standpoint of etymology I believe I am right in saying that the use of *ess* as a suffix to designate the women of any race is practically obsolete. Out of courtesy to a race and a sex I suggest that you hereafter discard the offensive term *Negress*.
>
> It was petty, to say the least, to refer to Miss Harrison as *Juanita* in the editorial preface to her letters. Perhaps it is mere class distinction, but class distinction should be beneath the dignity of your pages. A witness in a recent kidnapping case, though only a nursemaid, was referred to as *Miss* Betty Gow. Certainly Miss Harrison, whose honesty you commend and whose native intelligence merited a place in your pages, deserves at least common courtesy at your hands.

To this the editor of the *Atlantic* replied lamely that he 'really did not know that the word *Negress* carried a derogatory connotation.' 'I suppose,' he went on, 'that the feeling must come from the analogy of the suffix *-ess* being used throughout the animal kingdom.' In further confession and avoidance he cited the parallel terms, *Jewess* and *Quakeress*, conveniently overlooking the fact (maybe also unknown to him) that the former is vastly disliked by Jews. As to the use of her simple given-name in referring to Miss Harrison he said:

> In the correspondence regarding her which came from a former employer she was continually referred to as *Juanita*, and it was natural to transfer this designation to the *Atlantic*. We certainly meant no disrespect, for as you surmise, we thought her an honest, interesting and able character.

Other Negro publicists have proposed various substitutes for any designation pointing directly to color, among them *race* and *group*. According to Dr. Miller, *racemen* was suggested

in 1936 or thereabout by Robert L. Abbot, editor of the Chicago *Defender.* Dr. Miller himself rejected it as equally applicable to a white man or an Indian and predicted that it would 'fall under the weight of its own ineptness.' It has, however, survived more or less, and *group* is really flourishing. Many of the Negro newspapers use *our group, group man, group leader,* etc. Some of them also use such terms as *brown-skinned* and *sepia* to get away from the forthright but usually inaccurate *black,* and in 1944 there was a *Sepia* Miss America contest operated by a committee in Boston.[10]

At present the surviving objection to *Negro,* now capitalized by nearly all American publications, takes two forms. First, there is a campaign against using it whenever a person of color comes into the news, on the ground that calling attention to his race is gratuitous, and usually damaging to the other members of it. Second, there is resentment of the unhappy fact that the word is frequently mispronounced, and tends to slide into the hated *nigger.* In the South it is commonly heard as *nigrah,*[11] and not only from white lips. Indeed, *nigrah* is also used by Northern Negroes, including some of the most eminent, as witness the following protest from a reader of the Pittsburgh *Courier.*

> A great many professional Negro orators, prominent speakers, leaders and so on are speaking on the radio all over the country—on forums, 'March of Time' programs, etc. Nearly all make the one big noticeable error of pronouncing *Negro* as if it were spelled *nigro* or *nigrah.* . . . It is all the more noticeable when white people are on the same program. They pronounce *Negro* correctly, with the emphasis on *ne* and not *nig.*[12]

Worse, even the abhorred *nigger* is in wide use among the colored people themselves, especially on the lower levels. Said Lucius Harper, managing editor of the Chicago *Defender,* in 1939:

> It is a common expression among the ordinary Negroes and is used frequently in conversation between them. It carries no odium or sting when used by themselves, but they object keenly to whites using it because it conveys the spirit of hate, discrimination and prejudice.[13]

Nigger is so bitterly resented by the more elegant members of the race that they object to it even in quotations, and not a few of their papers spell it *n——r* when necessity forces them to use it.[14] On March 4, 1936, Garnet C. Wilkinson, first assistant superintendent of schools of Washington, in charge of the Negro public schools of the District of Columbia, actually recommended to Superintendent F. W. Ballou that *Opportunity,* for years a recognized leader among Negro magazines, be barred from the schools of the District on the ground that it used 'the opprobrious term *N———* in its publications on Negro life.' When news of this recommendation reached Elmer A. Carter, the editor, he naturally protested, and under date of March 11 received the following from Dr. Wilkinson:

It is contrary to a long established administrative policy, initiated and fostered by the school teachers and officers of Divisions 10-13 of the public schools of the district,[15] to recommend to the Board of Education the adoption of any textbook, basic or supplementary, magazine, or periodical known to make use of the term *N——* in its publication.

Textbooks published by white authors and making use of such material have been refused for adoption in our public schools. Textbooks have been withdrawn from the approved list for the same reason. Obviously, a textbook, magazine, or periodical published by a *Negro* should be subject to the same administrative policy. There can be no double standard of evaluating such school materials—one standard for white authors, another standard for Negro authors.

You are now advised that this office would be willing to recommend the placing of *Opportunity* on the approved list of magazines and periodicals for the public schools of the District if you, as editor, will give us the assurance that *Opportunity* will discontinue the policy of using any opprobrious term or terms in referring to the Negro.

Mr. Carter replied to this curious communication under date of March 17, as follows:

Even a casual examination of the magazine will reveal that your recommendation has been based on a total misconception of the use of the term *nigger* when it appears in *Opportunity.* That use is limited to quotations from other writers or is the reproduction in poem or story of the speech and conversation of characters who commonly use this term, and in both cases the word or the line in which it occurs is

always set off by quotation marks, italics, or other literary and printing insignia.

It should not be necesary for me to direct your attention to the fact that there is a vast and obvious difference in the use of a word or phrase in quotation and its use as a definitive term in the editorial contents of a publication, nor to affirm that *Opportunity* never employs an epithet of opprobrium in its columns except under the limitations mentioned above.

If impartially applied, the ruling of the Board of Education will achieve astonishing if not fantastic results. For by the same standards the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, *Harper's*, *Time*, the *Literary Digest*, the *Forum*, in fact, almost every magazine which on occasion publishes stories or articles involving the Negro, must likewise be removed from the list of magazines approved for the children in the Negro schools of Washington. By the same token the most authoritative books on the Negroes' status in America must of necessity fail of approval as suitable reading matter for Negro children in the District of Columbia. For this incredible decision would refuse approval to 'The Souls of Black Folk' and 'Black Reconstruction,' by DuBois; 'The Black Worker,' by Harris; 'Shadow of the Plantation,' by Johnston; the autobiography of Frederick Douglass; 'The Life and Works of Booker T. Washington,' the novels of Walter White, Chestnutt and Dunbar, and the poetry of Countee Cullen, Sterling Brown, Langston Hughes, to mention only a few.[16]

Nothing came of this effort to purge *Opportunity of nigger*. I am told by Lester B. Granger, executive secretary of the National Urban League, that it is still used whenever required by 'a faithful description of real life situations,' though 'where it adds nothing to the context it is sometimes eliminated.' The same failure marked an effort to work up a boycott against Noxzema, a lotion popular among Negroes as among whites, because the credit manager of the manufacturing company had used the phrase *nigger in the woodpile* in a dunning circular to slow-paying druggists. This boycott was launched by an organization calling itself the National Commission on Negro Work, affiliated with the International Workers Order, and for a while a committee collected signatures to a paper demanding that the company 'apologize publicly,' discharge the offending credit manager, and 'open job

opportunities for Negroes in your plant.' Every signer was invited to make a contribution to 'a collection to defray costs of promotion only' and so deliver 'a sock at Hitlerism,' but the company refused to be intimidated, and nothing came of the boycott. Nor did any greater success attend an attack by the same National Commission on the A. & P. stores for selling a *Niggerhead* stove-polish. But a year before this the New York *Amsterdam News* apparently had better luck with a crusade against the American Tobacco Company for offering a *Niggerhead* smoking-tobacco, for on March 20, 1943 the *Nation* announced that the brand would be withdrawn. *Nigger in the woodpile* is traced by the *DAE* to 1861, and is defined by it as 'a concealed or inconspicuous but highly important fact, factor, or "catch" in an account, proposal, etc.' Of the six examples that it gives, two are from the *Congressional Record*. *Niggerhead,* in the more refined form of *negrohead,* is traced to 1833, and defined as 'a low grade of strong, dark-colored tobacco.' It was used by Huckleberry Finn in contradistinction to store-tobacco. *Niggerhead,* in the sense of a piece of extraordinary hard rock, goes back to 1847, and has been used in a report of the Smithsonian; it also appears in 'Chicago Poems' by Carl Sandburg, 1916.

Negro is not, of course, an Americanism. It is simply the Spanish and Portuguese word for 'black,' and was borrowed by the English during the Sixteenth Century. By 1587 a Northern English form, *neger,* had appeared, and it was from this that both the Irish *naygur* and the English-American *nigger* were derived. The *New English Dictionary's* first example of *nigger* comes from a poem by Robert Burns, published in 1786, in the United States, in the spelling of *niger,* the *Dictionary of American English* traces it to Samuel Sewall's diary, 1700. But after that the *DAE* offers no example until the Nineteenth Century. *Nigger-boy* is traced to 1825, *nigger-wench* to 1837, *nigger-regiment* to 1863, *nigger-talk* to 1866 (*nigger* alone, meaning the manner of speech of Negroes, goes back to 1825), *niggerish* to 1825, *nigger-killer* to 1856, *nigger-luck* (meaning

good luck) to 1851, and *nigger-heaven* (the top gallery in a theatre) to 1878. *Nigger-stealer,* once a term of opprobrium comparable to the *isolationist* of today, is not listed, and neither are *nigger-lover, nigger-job, nigger-mammy* and *nigger-gal.* There are many other derivatives. I have mentioned *nigger-head* in the sense of a lump of hard rock, and in that of coarse chewing and smoking tobacco. It is also used to designate the common black-eyed Susan, a variety of greenbrier, and one of cactus. After the Civil War it was used for a person in favor of full political equality for Negroes. There are a *nigger-duck,* a *nigger-goose,* a *nigger-weed,* and several kinds of *nigger-fish. To nigger off* means to divide a log into convenient lengths by burning through it, *to nigger out* means to exhaust the soil by working it without fertilizer, and *to nigger it* means to live meagrely. A *nigger* is a device used in sawmills to turn a heavy log, and also a defect in an electrical conductor, causing a short circuit. *Niggertoe* is a dialect name, in rural New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania, for a Brazil nut, and was once used to designate a variety of potato. *To work like a nigger* is traced by the *DAE* to 1836, and *to let off a little nigger* to 1828. The use of *niggerhead* to signify a hard stone was no doubt suggested by the old American belief that the skull of the Negro is extraordinarily thick, and hence able to stand hard blows without cracking. That superstition is accompanied by one to the effect that the shins of the colored folk are extremely tender. The notion that they have an inordinate fondness for watermelon belongs to the same category. This last is so far resented by high-toned Negroes that they commonly avoid *Citrullus vulgaris* in their diet as diligently as the more elegant sort of German-Americans used to avoid Limburger cheese.[17]

Before 1890, according to Dr. Miller, the Census Bureau 'sought to sub-divide the Negro group into *blacks, mulattoes, quadroons* and *octoroons,*' but found it 'impossible to make such sharp discriminations, since these divisions ran imperceptibly into one another.' It was upon the advice of Booker T. Washington that it began calling all colored persons of

African blood *Negroes. Mulatto, quadroon* and *octoroon* have now almost disappeared from American speech. Of them, only *octoroon* seems to be an Americanism. *Mulatto,* which comes from the Spanish and Portuguese *mulato,* signifying a young mule, and hence a halfbreed, is traced by the *NED* in English use to 1595. Originally, the word meant the immediate offspring of a Negro and a white person, but by the beginning of the Eighteenth Century it was being applied to anyone of mixed white and Negro blood. In the early chronicles and travel-books it was spelled in a dozen different ways, some of them quite fantastic, *e.g., malatta, melatto, muletto* and *mulattoe. Quadroon* is a loan from the *quateron* of the Louisiana French, who borrowed it in turn from the Spanish *cuarterón.* The *NED's* first example of *quarteron* is dated 1707; Thomas Jefferson used it in that form in 1793. In the form of *quatroon* it goes back to 1748 in English usage and to 1808 in American, and in the form of *quadroon* to 1796 and 1832 respectively. *Octoroon* is apparently more recent. There is no recorded trace of it before 1861, when Dion Boucicault used it in the title of a play. *Griffe,* another loan from the French of Louisiana, is now obsolete. It signified, according to Miss Grace E. King, quoted by the *DAE,*[18] a mixed breed one degree lighter than an *octoroon,* the series being *mulatto, quadroon, octoroon, griffe.*

The irreverent Schuyler, who does not hesitate to refer to the members of his race, in his column in the Pittsburgh *Courier,* as *Senegambians, tarbrushed folk* and so on, frequently discusses the opprobrious names that have been applied to them, *e.g., darkey, coon, shine, smoke, woolly-head, dinge* and *boogie.* In 1936, when the Baltimore *Afro-American* started a holy war against 'My Old Kentucky Home' because *darkey* occurs in it, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People denounced the Rev. Charles E. Coughlin for using it in a radio speech, he said:

> Will some one who has the gift of logic and intelligence tell me what is the difference between *darkey* and *Negro?* . . . There can be

no more real objection to *darkey* than there can be to *blondie.* It is a far more acceptable term than *wop* or *kike.* As my friend J. A. Rogers[19] once profoundly remarked, the difference between *Negro* and *nigger* is the difference between *sir* and *sah.* Granted that the overwhelming majority of Negroes are opposed to the use of these terms, I can see no point in constantly making a wailing protest against their use.

Coon, though it is now one of the most familiar designations for a Negro, apparently did not come into general use in that sense until the 80's; Thornton's first example is dated 1891 and the *DAE's* 1887.[20] For many years before that time the term had been used in the sense of a loutish white man, and in Henry Clay's day it had designated a member of the Whig party. It came originally, of course, from the name of the animal, *Procyon lotor,* which seems to have been borrowed from the Algonquian early in the Seventeenth Century, and was shortened from *raccoon* to *coon* before 1750. 'How the Negro Got the Name of Coon' is the title of one of the stories in a collection of Maryland folk-lore published by Mrs. Walter R. Bullock, Jr., in 1898,[21] but all it shows is that the Negro who is the chief figure called himself a *coon,* and that the name was afterward applied to others. Why he did so is not explained, nor when. The popularity of the term seems to have got a lift from the vast success of Ernest Hogan's song, 'All Coons Look Alike to Me,' in 1896. Hogan, himself a colored man, used it without opprobrious intent, and was amazed and crushed by the resentment it aroused among his people. Says Edward B. Marks in *They All Sang*:[22]

> The refrain became a fighting phrase all over New York. Whistled by a white man, it was construed as a personal insult. Rosamond Johnson[23] relates that he once saw two men thrown off a ferryboat in a row over the tune. Hogan became an object of censure among all the Civil Service intelligentsia, and died haunted by the awful crime he had unwittingly committed against his race.

'All Coons Look Alike to Me' was followed in 1899 by 'Every Race Has a Flag But the Coon,' by Heelan and Helf, two white men, and in 1900 by 'Coon, Coon, Coon,' by two

others, Jefferson and Friedman, and from that time forward *coon* was firmly established in the American vocabulary.[24] The history of the other more or less opprobrious synonyms for *Negro* is mainly obscure. The *DAE* does not list *boogie* and its congeners, but reports that *booger is* an Americanism, traced to 1866, for a bogy. In 1891 a writer in *Harper's Magazine,*[25] quoted by the *DAE,* defined *boogah-hole* as 'the hiding place of cats and of children fleeing from justice' and of *boogars* or *boogahs,* 'whatever these mysterious beings may be.' It is possible that the suggestion of darkness developed *boogie* from *booger* or *boogah.* The latter form, however, hints at a Southern variant of *bogy* or *bogey,* which has been traced in England by the *NED,* in the sense of the devil, to 1836, in the sense of a goblin to 1857, and in that of a bugbear to 1865. In Baltimore, in my childhood, *boogie-man* was one of the names of the devil.

Buffalo as a designation for a Negro is not listed by the *DAE,* but it gives the word as used to designate a North Carolina Unionist during the Civil War; it has also been applied to the people of seaboard North Carolina in general. From the early Eighteenth Century down to 1880 or thereabout *Cuffy* was a generic name for a Negro, comparable to *Pat* for an Irishman. George Philip Krapp says in *The English Language in America*[26] that 'it is said to be derived from Dutch *Koffi,* in Guiana a common name for Negroes and by custom applied to anyone born on Friday.' The *DAE* calls it 'of African origin' and traces it to 1713. It had a rival in *Sambo,* which apparently arose, not in the United States, but in England. The *DAE* traces it to 1748 there and to 1866 here. In my boyhood *Cuffy* had disappeared and *Sambo* was being supplanted by *Rastus.*[27] During the same era *Liza* or *Lize* was the common name for a colored girl. The *DAE* omits *dinge* and lists *dinkey* only in the adjectival sense of small, trifling. *Dinkey,* in the Baltimore of my nonage, meant a colored child. Webster's *New International,* 1934, lists *dinge,* but omits *dinkey* in the sense here considered. *Kink* shows an obvious allusion to the Negro's hair;

the *DAE* says that *kinky,* as applied to it, is an Americanism, and traces it to 1844. When, in 1936, Cab Calloway, the Negro musician, used *kinky-head* in a broadcast, he was violently belabored by the radio critic of one of the Negro weeklies.[28] *Woolly-head* is first found by the *DAE* in Cooper's *The Prairie* in 1827; it was also used by Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Dred: a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* in 1856. During the Civil War era the term was applied, like *buffalo,* to Unionists.

Moke is traced by the *DAE* to 1856, but the word was used in England before this in the sense of a donkey. An amateur lexicographer calling himself Socrates Hyacinth, writing in 1869,[29] sought to derive it 'from Icelandic *möckvi,* darkness,' and called it 'a word chiefly in use among the Regulars stationed in Texas and in the Territories.' He added that it also had 'Cymric affinities, and was probably brought into currency by Welsh recruits who have occasionally drifted into the Army from New York City.' This suggestion of possible Welsh origin was supported by an anonymous writer in the London *Daily Mirror* on November 28, 1938, who said that the etymology 'which receives the greatest expert support derives *moke* from the Welsh gipsy *moxio* or *moxia,* a donkey.' '*Moxio,*' he continued, 'existed some fifty years before the first recorded instance, in 1848, of *moke.* Moreover, about 1839 somebody of the name of Brandon records *moak* as a cant word of gipsy origin, and, at that time, mainly gipsy use.' The *NED* calls *moke* 'of unknown origin,' and Webster's *New International* marks it 'origin uncertain.' Ernest Weekley, in his *Etymological Dictionary of Modern English,*[30] suggests that it is perhaps from some name (*Moggy?*) applied to the ass,' and says that *Mocke, Mok, Mog* and *Mug* 'all occur as personal names in the Thirteenth Century and survive in the surnames *Mokes* and *Moxon.*' *Moke* was thrown into competition with *coon* in 1899 by the success of 'Smokey Mokes,' a popular song by Holzmann and Lind, but is now heard only seldom. *Pickaninny,* in the sense of a Negro child, is not an Americanism. It was in use in England so long ago as 1657, whereas

the *DAE's* first American example is dated 1800. The English prefer the spelling *piccaninny;* the word, in the past, was variously spelled *piccanini, pickoninnie, pick'ny, piccanin* and *picannin.* It appears to be derived from the Cuban Spanish *piquinini,* meaning a small child, and it was taken into English in the British West Indies. It is used in South Africa precisely as we use it, but is commonly spelled *piccanin.* In Australia it designates a child of the aborigines, and has there produced a derivative, *piccaninny-daylight,* signifying dawn.[31] In the Baltimore of my youth *pickaninny* was not used invidiously, but rather affectionately. So, indeed, was *tar-pot,* also signifying a Negro child.

The *DAE* does not list such vulgar synonyms for *Negro* as *ape, eightball, jazzbo, jigabo* (with the variants, *jibagoo, jig, zigabo, zigaboo, zig*), *jit, seal, shine, skunk, smoke, snowball, spade, squasho* and *Zulu, Crow* is traced to 1823, when it was used by Cooper in *The Pioneers,* the first of the Leatherstocking tales. Whether it suggested *Jim Crow* or was itself suggested by *Jim Crow* I do not know. The *DAE's* first example of *Jim Crow* is dated 1838, but that example includes the statement that '"Zip Coon" and "Jim Crow" are hymns of great antiquity.' The *DAE* says, however, that Thomas D. Rice's song and dance, 'Jim Crow,' was written in 1832.[32] The verb phrase, *to jump Jim Crow,* appeared a year later. By 1838 *Jim Crow* had become an adjective and it was so used by Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* 1852; of late it has also become a verb. The *DAE's* first example of *Jim Crow car* is dated 1861; of *Jim Crow school,* 1903; of *Jim Crow bill,* 1904; of *Jim Crow law,* 1904, and of *Jim Crow regulations,* 1910. On April 10, 1943, the *Nation* used *Jap Crow* in the title of an article on the internment of the Japanese of the Pacific Coast, but this Winchellism did not catch on. *Eightball,* without doubt, is derived from the game of pool, which is played with fifteen numbered and vari-colored balls, No. 8 being black. The *DAE* lists *blueskin* as an early synonym for Negro. It occurs in Cooper's *The Spy,* 1821, but had become

obsolete before the Civil War. In Baltimore, in the 80's of the last century, the German-speaking householders, when they had occasion to speak of Negro servants in their presence, called them *die blaue.* In the 70's *die schwarze* had been used, but it was believed that the Negroes had fathomed it. In the Bronx, so I am informed by a correspondent, the Jewish housekeepers use *die gelbe,* with *ein gelber* in the singular. Without doubt *gelbe* has failed of its purpose as miserably as *blaue,* for the colored folk always penetrate the stratagems of the Caucasian, and chuckle over them in a sad but amiable manner.

[1] '*Negroes* or Colored People?,' May, 1937, pp. 142-46.

[2] Here Dr. Miller slipped. The *New English Dictionary* says that *Jew* was 'originally a Hebrew of the kingdom of Judah.'

[3] It survives, however, in the name of the *Afrıco-American Presbyterian,* a weekly published since 1879 by the Negro Presbyterian Church at Charlotte, N. C.

[4] Many other terms, now obsolete, were used in the era, *e.g.,* the abbreviation *f.m.c.* (free man of color). Carl Sandburg says in his *Abraham Lincoln: the War Years* (New York, 1939), Vol. II, p. 137: 'Demurrings arose to Lincoln's progressions in styling the Negroes, in 1859, *negroes;* in 1860, *colored men;* in 1861, *intelligent contrabands;* in 1862, *free Americans of African descent.' Contraband* came into use in 1861, when General Benjamin F. Butler issued a proclamation declaring slaves owned by Confederates contraband of war, but it was forgotten by 1870.

[5] It is the name of a Negro newspaper of wide circulation and influence, published in Baltimore with local editions in other places. The readers of the paper in Baltimore call it the *Afro,* and it so refers to itself. 'It is interesting to note,' said Dr. Miller, 'that the *Afrıco-American Presbyterian* and the *Afro-American,* which stress their names in heavy type at the head of their papers, rarely use these terms in their news service or editorial columns.'

[6] It was preceded, and probably suggested, by *Amerindian,* a name for the American Indian coined by Major J. W. Powell, of the Bureau of American Ethnology, in 1899. *Amerindian* was quickly displaced by *Amerind,* which is still in use. In South Africa a similar quest for a sonorous designation for themselves has been carried on by the natives. 'Their latest choice,' said J. A. Rogers in *Sex and Race* (New York, 1941), p. 131, 'is *Eur-African.*' But this is objected to by the whites, who say that they are the only real *Eur-Africans.* The term *Afrikander,* which might well designate the blacks, is already monopolized by the whites. In Liberia the descendants of returned American slaves who constitute the ruling caste of the country used to call themselves *Americo-Liberians* to distinguish their group from the general mass of blacks. But I am informed by Mr. Ben Hamilton, Jr., formerly of the Liberian consulate in Los Angeles, that this compound is now out of favor. He says: 'Because of the great amount of intermarriage between the descendants of colonists to Liberia from America with aborigines of the Negro republic, and because of a wave of nationalism that is sweeping the country, Liberians

consider the term *Americo-Liberian* opprobrious as reflecting upon their [ancestors'] condition of servitude in the States. Hence they prefer to be called *civilized* or *Monrovian Liberians* to distinguish them from the natives of the hinterland, who are generally called by their tribal names.' Monrovia is the capital of Liberia, and the home of virtually all its *nobless*.

[7] Mexicans were not formally classified as white until the 1940 Census. Before that they were lumped with 'other races.' Very few of them, of course, are actually white, even in part. The change was made in furtherance of the Good Neighbor policy.

[8] 'Views and Reviews,' Pittsburgh *Courier*, July 17, 1937.

[9] Some of the Negro papers carry their liking for this honorific so far that they apply it to lady criminals. I take the following, for example, from the New York *Amsterdam News*, Jan. 15, 1944, p. 8-B: 'On the eve of her trial for fatally bludgeoning another woman to death [*sic*] last April, Beatrice Watson, 23, avoided a possible life term in prison last week by pleading guilty to second degree manslaughter. As a result Miss Watson will be faced with a penalty of not more than 15 years.'

[10] 'Miss America Contest Plans Given to Public,' by Paul Davis, New York *Amsterdam News*, March 18, 1944, p. 6-A.

[11] In *The Field, the Dungeon and the Escape*, by Albert D. Richardson (Hartford, Conn., 1865), p. 37, a Southern planter was made to use *nig-roe*. I have heard *niggero*, but only in sportive use.

[12] This protest appeared May 15, 1943, in 'Yes! We All Talk,' a philological column conducted by Marcus H. Boulware. Mr. Boulware, in a note appended to the letter, said that *'ne* in *Negro* should rime with *see*, and *gro* with *grow*.'

[13] Quoted in 'Journalistic Headache,' by R. E. Wolseley, *Ken*, March 9, 1939.

[14] For example, I find the following on p. 1 of the Pittsburgh *Courier*, Nov. 1, 1941, in a dispatch from Due West, S. C., reporting the beating of a colored pastor, the Rev. B. J. Glover, Jr., 'because law officers of this prejudice-ridden town thought he was too uppity for a *N———r*.' Here, it will be noted the offending word was given a capital *N*. In the same dispatch occurred the following: 'Another officer said, "Let's teach that *D... N.....* a lesson," and struck Rev. Glover.'

[15] These divisions are made up of Negro elementary and high schools.

[16] This correspondence was published in full in *Opportunity*, April, 1936, pp. 126-27.

[17] From 'Journalistic Headache,' by R. E. Wolseley, already cited, I take the following: 'The sports editor of a small Midwestern daily learned this unforgettably one Fall when he jokingly suggested that a good way to stop Ozzie Simmons, the great negro football star from Iowa, was to roll a number of big juicy watermelons out on the field. . . . Telephone calls, letters and personal visits from the Negroes of the city made him realize he had hurt some feelings. A formal protest—a petition—from the local Inter-Racial Council brought the matter to the attention of the newspaper's managing editor.'

[18] *New Orleans: The Place and the People* (New York, 1895), p. 333.

[19] A Negro historian, already mentioned. He has published a number of valuable books on the history of his people, and accumulated an enormous store of illustrative material.

[20] Walter D. Edmonds says in *American Notes and Queries,* May, 1941, p. 23, that 'Zip Coon, the blackface song, was being sung in 1834,' but it apparently did not lead to the application of *coon* to Negroes.

[21] *Journal of American Folk-Lore,* Jan.-March, 1898, pp. 13, 14.

[22] New York, 1935, p. 91.

[23] The colored composer of 'Under the Bamboo Tree,' 'Oh, Didn't He Ramble,' 'Lazy Moon,' and other songs of the 90's, and also of the Negro anthem, 'Lift Every Voice and Sing.' The words of some of his songs were written by his brother, James Weldon Johnson (1871-1933), the best poet the race has yet produced.

[24] In South Africa the term is sometimes used by the newspapers to designate a black native, apparently without derogatory intent. The following is from 'Stilt-Walker of Serowe,' by Norman Howell, *Cape Times* (Cape Town), Aug. 22, 1936: 'Why is stilt-walking a common thing among the *coons* of the Cape?' In the Virgin Islands, formerly under the Danish flag, the blacks are called *goons* or *goonies.* In 'Lazy Islands Come to Life,' Baltimore *Sunday Sun,* March 22, 1942, Lawrence H. Baker suggested that the *g* may be 'a guttural izing of the *c* in *coon,* arising out of the Danes' attempts to pronounce the latter word.'

[25] Oct., 1891, p. 825.

[26] New York, 1925, Vol. I, p. 256.

[27] The once very popular song, 'Rastus on Parade,' by Kerry Mills, was published in 1896.

[28] The episode is recorded by Schuyler in the Pittsburgh *Courier,* Nov. 7, 1936.

[29] 'South-Western Slang,' *Overland Monthly,* Aug. His article is reprinted in full in *The Beginnings of American English,* by M. M. Mathews (Chicago, 1931), pp. 151-63.

[30] New York, 1921, p. 942.

[31] *A Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang, by* Sidney J. Baker (second ed., Melbourne, 1943), p. 58. See also *Australian English,* by Edward E. Morris (London, 1898), p. 350.

[32] Rice (1808-1860) was a comedian, playwright and song-writer, and 'Jim Crow' was only one of his songs that became popular. He is not to be confused with Dan Rice (1822-1900), an acrobat, circus clown and temperance orator.

PARENTS, IT'S YOUR FAULT

By

NORRIS E. ORCHARD

If you have a child between the ages of ten and twenty-one within the sound of your voice, call and ask him what is meant by "the golden calf" or "the ugly duckling". If he is able to answer you, ask him where he found out the answers. It should have been in your house. Well, you say, what is a school for?

You will find that the whole business of education has become a frightening chain of buck-passing. The college blames the secondary school for sending on insufficiently prepared students, the secondary school blames the elementary school and the kindergarten, the kindergarten blames the home; and the home, looking pathetically for some one to blame, turns to chromosomes and prenatal influences.

The other day a class of sixteen-year-old boys discussing English literature came across one of the intensely devout poets of the seventeenth century, a poet who spoke with tenderness and humility of The Cross. Then came to light the incredible fact that three-quarters of that class of twenty young Americans from civilized and privileged homes had no idea of the significance of The Cross. No idea of the meaning of the symbol of Christianity, a symbol of agony and sacrifice which has influenced literature and painting and sculpture and philosophy for two thousand years.

Don't misunderstand: this article is not dealing with religious training; it is dealing with background. You do not need to be a Mohammedan to know that such a book as the Koran exists. This article is dealing with background, the kind of

background which is necessary for the intelligent understanding of most of the world's thought and art and history; everything, in other words, that falls outside the circle of petty gossip.

Now what is the reason for this ignorance, this fact that fifteen out of twenty normal people had no idea of the meaning of The Cross? And they would have been equally baffled by a mention of Sir Isaac Newton, of Euclid, of Aunt March, of Uriah Heep.

The reason is that the generation which is growing up today doesn't read. It doesn't know how to read.

Some one mentions the fiery furnace to you, and you know at once what is meant, because you have read about it; and if you were fortunate, you had one of those illustrated Bible-story books with hair-raising drawings of Shadrach, Meschach, and Abed-nego. The present generation knows those three names, but not for the reason you think: it is because one of the popular swing bands has made a record with that title. Probably you know what is meant by a mention of Mr. Micawber and something about to turn up; of the Pool of Tears; of the Owl and the Pussy Cat; of Dr. Watson; of Jos Sedley; of Dr. Foster who went to Gloucester; but your children don't. Because they don't read.

The reasons that they don't read are obvious. Stand outside a movie theater some beautiful Saturday afternoon. Watch the children come out, rubbing their eyes (they've sat through two full-length films), pale, yawning to get clean air; and remember what happened on your Saturday afternoons. Remember how you played bandit or Robin Hood, drawing on your reading for inspiration. Sit near a radio in those precious dark hours before dinner on a winter evening, the time when you used to be able to come in from a snow-ball fight and join a ride down the Paris road with d'Artagnan. Listen for a few evenings to the brave little girl who finally gets through her algebra test at Southwest High or the virtuous and goggled young men fighting eternally against the monsters of the

twenty-first century, and see if it's a better race that we're breeding.

Of course the movies are fun: the radio can be fun when it isn't scaring the next generation to death or filling it with all sorts of queer ideas of success; but there was a day when the movies and the radio didn't absorb all the time that ordinarily can be given to reading. There is just as much time in a day as there was, and today's children are just as bright and have just as much information as you had. The only difference lies in the kind of information. They can tell you every move that the characters in the funny paper have made for the last year. They know an amazing number of batting averages. They are astonishingly glib about the personnel of the various jazz orchestras. Well, we all used to know our batting averages too. But today's children know nothing about books. And isn't that their parents' fault?

What are the books and stories you remember best? Aren't they the books you read in the fourth or fifth year of your reading proficiency? Can't you quote endlessly the names of characters from the reading you did in those early years? The depressing fact remains that the reading done before twenty is the reading that sticks. What is the name of the heroine of the novel you liked so much last year? For that matter, what is the name of the novel? Who was the principal male character in *Dusty Answer,* in *The Matriarch,* in *It Can't Happen Here?* You'd know if you'd read them at fourteen. You wasted your time on a lot of junk: so did we all. And we all enjoyed it. Remember that a child's reading is the reading of a completely free spirit. "I like it," the child can say, and he will have no fears of being wrong. He doesn't have to agree with the best-seller lists just because he thinks he should, and he doesn't have to disagree just to be contrary. There is his mind, wanting to be filled, ready to take whatever comes to it; and see what it is getting.

You know what the ordinary grade-B movie of today is like: you've sat through hundreds of them in order to see what

they call the main feature. It doesn't need much arguing to convince you that they aren't worth any one's Saturday afternoon. But do you know what the late afternoon radio programs are like? Those programs that take up most of the air between four-thirty and six, practising the neat little box-top racket: "Mother buy us some Barley-Goo so that we can get an F-man badge." Have you ever listened to them?

Station a. Announcer: What does Woody intend to do with Valerie's check for one thousand dollars, made out to cash?

Station b. (Apparently a play within a play)
Announcer: Tonight we present Miss Wilbur in a one-act play, SOUTH OF THE RIO GRANDE.
Mexican Voice: Your most gracious pardon, Senorita. Allow me to return the ring.
Ingenue: Then you are just a common bandit.
Ingenue: My father is an entomologist.
Mexican: That means?
Ingenue: Oh, just bugs.
Mexican: Greengo ees funny people. Out in world there is lovely music and dancing, and they go after bugs.
Mexican: You take me seriously?
Ingenue: I can't take you at all. You have taken me.
(Then the play ends after a good deal more of this talk)
Woody: Gee, Dad.
Dad: Judy was swell. I think we're going to have her tied up with Marshall Films. Judy will be in the spotlight.
Woody: Dad, I believe in Judy Wilbur like I believed in . . . in Mother, Dad.

Station c. Scene: Damascus.
Pete: Hi, Jack. Come here. See if you can make this puddin'-head talk.
Deep Voice: Ha, ha, ha.
Pete: Are you laffin'?
Deep Voice: I am laughing at me. I amuse me.
Jack: Pete, we've got orders. We've got to find Uncle Jim.

Station d.
Voice: It's the reaction to this let-down. There's no chance for her to escape.
Another Voice: I don't blame ya for feelin' low about this,

Skipper. You deserve a rest, Skipper.
Skipper: The Scorpion isn't going to take this lying down.

Station e.
Man's Voice: Those three guards . . .
Child's Voice: We don't have to worry, Daddy.
Daddy (apparently speaking to prisoners): How do you three like being prisoners?
Daddy: We sure do need that plane. It's goin' to help us locate the secret radium field.

There it is, fragmentary, to be sure, but you can fill it in any afternoon at your own radio.

Of course, no one ever believes that a quotation from a book taken at random is really at random, but these are the first paragraphs we open to in a few books:

Long John's eyes burned in his head as he took the chart; but by the fresh look of the paper, I knew he was doomed to disappointment. This was not the map we found in Billy Bones's chest, but an accurate copy, complete in all things — names and heights and soundings — with the single exception of the red crosses and the written notes. Sharp as must have been this annoyance, Silver had the strength of mind to hide it.

"Yes, sir," said he, "this is the spot, to be sure; and very prettily drawed out. Who might have done that, I wonder? The pirates were too ignorant, I reckon. Ay, here it is: 'Capt. Kidd's Anchorage' — just the name my shipmate called it."

. . . the old queen packed up quantities of clothes and jewels, gold and silver, cups and ornaments, and, in fact, everything suitable to a royal outfit, for she loved her daughter very dearly.

She also sent a waiting-woman to travel with her, and to put her hand into that of the bride-groom. They each had a horse. The princess's horse was called Falada, and it could speak.

It is said that the effect of eating too much lettuce is "soporific."

I have never felt sleepy after eating lettuces; but then *I* am not a rabbit.

They certainly had a very soporific effect upon the Flopsy Bunnies!

When Benjamin Bunny grew up, he married his Cousin Flopsy. They had a large family, and they were very improvident and cheerful.

This is the tower of Babel. The people are all at work building

it. They want to build it up as high as the sky. They say, Come, let us build a tower that shall reach up to Heaven! But God sees the tower, and he is not pleased with them for building it. And now he will do a very wonderful thing to stop them. He will make them, all at once, speak in a different way from what they spoke before. Then they cannot go on building the tower because they do not understand one another.

There was, as I had noticed on my first visit long ago, an iron safe in the room. The key was in it. A hasty suspicion seemed to strike Uriah; and, with a glance at Mr. Micawber, he went to it, and threw the doors clanking open.

So I just took a look, and shoved along, straight for town. Well, the very first man I see when I got there was the duke. He was sticking up a bill for the "Royal Nonesuch" — three-night performance — like that other time. *They* had the cheek, them frauds! I was right on him before I could shirk. He looked astonished and says:

"Hel-*lo!* Where'd *you* come from?" Then he says, kind of glad and eager, "Where's the raft? —

Find us magic like to this coming through the ether on an ordinary afternoon, and we'll take it all back, a thousand times.

No one would advocate a ban on radio listening for the young. There is a tremendous amount of highly useful and entertaining broadcasting going on today, broadcasting which a child should certainly be permitted to hear. But books deserve an even break. It is not necessary to say that the motion pictures are fun. None of us would be without the memory of *Robin Hood* or *Snow White* or the first *Beau Geste* and many others, but no one would deny that the excitement of those films taken from books is half the result of knowing the books ahead of time. Would you rather look at snapshots of people you know, or of the acquaintances your friends made on last summer's boat trip?

II

The reason for the title to this article is that so many parents leave to the school all the exposure to this background we have been talking about. It is the school's business too, of course, but there are many things to cover in school, matters

which need the background the home can give; and the school hasn't time for all of it. More than that, even though you make school as attractive as you like and give children the choice of different-colored seats every morning, you still leave them with the idea that reading is school work to be left behind with the arithmetic examples and the yellow paper daffodils they have been pasting in a springtime window.

What they are going to remember in the greatest detail when they have grown up is the life they know at home. Is it to be largely a memory of twirling dials and a rush to make the early show?

III

It is all very well to deplore the lack of background in the ordinary American youth, but it is not all very well to make no constructive suggestions about it. How can you go about interesting a child in reading?

In the first place, a couple of *don'ts*. Don't pay a child to read. By reducing reading to the level of cutting the lawn, you make it something to be finished as efficiently and as absent-mindedly as possible. There was a little girl who was paid when she was nine years old to read a life of Martin Luther. Any excitement she could have found in a tale of perseverance and heroism was lost in a constant calculation that when ten more pages were finished, she would have another ten cents in the bank. Another little girl was sent off by herself when she needed punishment and made to read the family genealogy. Today when she visits the cemetery where her forebears lie, the elms echo with her glee as she walks between the tombstones, a "serves-you-right" expression on her face.

The best way to interest children in reading is to read aloud to them. But don't force it. Don't make any one stay to listen. You have every right not to be interrupted; but any child who does not want to listen should be at complete liberty to go away and play by himself. A third little girl had all her potential affection for Dickens killed, because her father in a burst of Bracebridge Hall enthusiasm insisted—before any one

had been allowed to open a single present—on reading the *Christmas Carol* aloud every twenty-fifth of December for fifteen years. It's a tough literature that can stand abuse like that.

The best time to read to children is at bedtime. Any child loves the feeling that he is being permitted to stay up a little late, even if it be for fifteen or twenty minutes—notice all the common ruses about drinks of water—and if he feels that he is getting a little respite on the regulations about the bed hour, a child will gladly listen to anything. Read aloud yourself: you will find a great satisfaction in having them tell you just what was happening when you left off last night. If you are going out for the evening, appoint a deputy reader, or explain long enough ahead of time so that the disappointment will not be sudden.

Don't pick books which are too young for your audience. Better let the youngest listener strain upward than stultify the older ones. The age gauges for children's books are about as reliable as the size gauges for their clothes. Dig back and remember when you were able to take *Treasure Island* and *Huck Finn* well in stride. A child will find out that there are times when it is inconvenient for old people to read to him: and he will begin to read for himself. A pleasant end of the day has led painlessly into a permanent and joyful habit.

Twenty minutes a day with your children at bedtime. When no one is whining, and when every one is clean and wide-eyed, and you are the means of carrying them to Camelot or Rome or the banks of the Mississippi. Is twenty minutes a day too much for that?

The high-priests of education are spending these days a great deal of their time and energy on reading. Not only with the appalling lack of background, which is our principal concern here; but with the difficulty, amounting to inability, in the simple mechanical process. Children read too slowly; they read inaccurately; they can't remember what they read. We don't need to go into the ramifications of this inability, the

serious effect it has on all school work. There is a great deal of talk carried on in the professional jargon about strephosymbolia (mirror vision) and what seems to have become the *craft* of reading. Now, no one would pretend that there is not such a condition as strephosymbolia, or that there is not cause for honest alarm in the reading inaptitude of many school children. The technicians, with their tests and their special classes, have done untold good and removed many a child from that miserable state of thinking himself a hopeless dunce. But a disproportionate amount of this technical difficulty is the direct result of failure to practise. How can any one expect a child to read well in school when he never reads at all anywhere else? When reading is limited to the "Bop's" and "Zowie's" of the funny paper, what hope is there for easy reading? There is yet to appear any method of increasing speed and comprehension which is better than the constant practice and fun of reading for what the book says, the fun of being hardly able to wait to find out what the Black Prince will discover behind the wall.

Faced with the enormous amount of juvenile literature that the world contains, a modern parent will quite understandably reel. Books about aeroplanes, books about oil wells, books about locomotives. Books about everything, and the book salesman can make them all sound good. There is more good juvenile literature being written today than ever before, but you as a parent need have little worry about it. The people who give presents to your children will take care of the new books. What are the old-timers that they need?

Well, in the first place, your own books. Don't be afraid of them because they are not modern. Don't listen to the people who say that modern children want to read about the twentieth century. Of course they do, but they love to read about the past too. Just as you did. You didn't think that stories were hopelessly out of date because people went everywhere on horseback. Or that a duel on the castle ramparts was silly because the duelers didn't use pistols. The stories of

ancient Rome that used to mean a lot to you are no farther away from your children than they were from you. So banish the cry for modernity. The twentieth century will take care of itself. But the past occasionally needs a little caring for.

It is too much to expect any child to be able to read the ordinary edition of the King James Bible. It is hard enough for a theologian to follow the intricacies of the numbered verses, the copious cross references. Even such a beautiful book as Ernest Sutherland Bates's *Bible Designed to be Read as Living Literature* is too much for a child. Partly because, as Alice said, there are no pictures or conversations. The conversations are so hidden that they might just as well not be there. No, find one of those illustrated books of Bible stories, one with a picture or two on every page. Remember how they looked to you: Nebuchadnezzar eating grass; Hagar and Ishmael going off into the wilderness; those wonderfully mystical drawings of God speaking out of the fire or the clouds, with clear rays of light breaking through the mist. The whole story of the wandering of the Hebrews will have meaning; the oppression in Egypt and the triumph of escape through the Red Sea will all become part of your child's early knowledge. And he will never lose it.

Aesop's *Fables* with those crotchety and human animals. The myths of Greece and Rome, with all the grisly stories of Black Tartarus, the sunlight of Arcadian hills. The Norse myths and the lusty, bearded heroes with their great blond women. Tales of the Heroes: will Buck Rogers in his private twenty-fifth century stand up so much better than Horatius at the bridge? Tales of the Kings: the Tower of London, the little Princes, and Bonnie Prince Charlie on the Scottish moors. Louis XI, Richelieu, the French Revolution, Napoleon.

American History: *The Oregon Trail*, the settling of the West. The New England farmer looking up hastily from the family Bible when he hears a click at the window. The majesty of Lincoln and the horror of the Civil War, the World War. All from books.

How often every one has heard the comment: "I can't stand poetry. It just doesn't mean anything to me." But has any one ever heard a child say it of "Jack and Jill"? Naturally not, because a child normally has a sense of rhythm: he is fascinated by those early repetitions in meter, the recurring sounds of a rhyme. It is not until he goes to school and begins to be told that he must enjoy verse that he begins to build that protective wall about himself. Schools do untold harm by forcing on children little lyrics about death and sorrow, such things as Lowell's "First Snowfall" with its grave that is being covered up by the snow. No child is ready to dwell on the mystery of death with anything like understanding or sympathy; and if the elementary schools would only learn it, poetry would not die the wretched death that it does today with a large majority of its potential audience. Show us the two-year-old child who will not go delightedly through the pantomime of "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man . . .", and we'll say that poetry is not for him.

The trouble is, of course, that there is almost no attempt to lead a child through the logical steps of progression in poetry. He should have nursery rhymes, that goes without saying. But poetry shouldn't be dropped there only to be taken up and rapidly strangled in the fifth grade with all the blessings-on-thee-little-man syrup of the nineteenth-century American poets, strangled because the child has not a solid enough background to know that he is reading junk and that there is a lot of verse that is really good. Let him read some narrative verse: *Hiawatha;* some of the *Lays of Ancient Rome;* "Lochinvar", "The Inchcape Rock". He is able to read for what he likes. It is only a few years before the teachers and the critics will begin to point a bony finger at him, asking him how he can possibly have such opinions as he has. But for the present he is free. He reads without fear, and soon he will begin to tell for himself what is worth his trouble. He is building a background of a sense of rhythm and language; later

on he will be able to look without terror at the huge panorama of English verse.

By all means, give them the nonsense books. Mother Goose. Don't forget Edward Lear's *Nonsense Books* with their limericks and long stories in rhyme. Try to find in the English language a more beautiful and tongue-enchanting series of sounds than the last stanza of "The Owl and the Pussy Cat":

> They dinèd on mince and slices of quince,
> Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
> And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
> They danced by the light of the moon,
> The moon,
> The moon,
> They danced by the light of the moon.

Alice in Wonderland, and *Through the Looking Glass, Davy and the Goblin,* with its couplet, long before Ogden Nash:

> I have a little garden
> That I'm cultivating lard in . . .

Grimm's *Fairy Tales,* all beginning with "Once upon a time", Hans Anderson's fairy tales, Andrew Lang's rainbow-colored collection. Beatrix Potter's stories of rabbits and mice and squirrels for the smallest member of the family. *The Wind in the Willows.*

As the smallest member grows older there are *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn; Treasure Island;* Thomas Bailey Aldrich's *Story of a Bad Boy.* Judge Shute's stories, which have won over to the cause the most confirmed non-readers, of Me and Beany and Pewt. Dickens and *David Copperfield,* his favorite child. The stories of Louisa May Alcott, which for some mysterious reason are as interesting to boys as to girls.

My list could go on indefinitely, and so, by this time probably, could yours.

IV

You may have noticed that twice already in this article there has been mention of junk. The term is used without

malice, for it is a mistake to try to regiment a child's reading to what his elders think he ought to have. That strange censorship of the last century which frowned upon the dime novel as being evil, when in reality it was the most moral kind of literature, only sent unnumbered little boys out to the haymow to read there in secret of the final victory of virtue and the heart of gold. Let them read junk: let them read the modern equivalents to *The Rover Boys, The Bobbsey Twins,* and *Sink or Swim, Do or Die, The Erie Trainboy.* Let them listen to the brave children on the radio, but see that they give a fair chance to some of the books that will matter to them.

Probably you are already living again some of the fun of reading those books which your children have never read. Never read because there hasn't been time? No, there has been time, and there is still time.

It's all up to you, not to them, because you know what they are missing. You can mend that gap.

You can send your children away to school and college and to the world and know that when they are lonely or disheartened, they will be able to turn to books. You will know that they will be able to enter an intelligent conversation and not be stumped by a lot of things they've never heard of. You will know that they will be able to listen to poetry with a tuned mind, be able to enter an art gallery without fear. That they will not say as a young girl did in a Broadway play a few seasons back, when the sound of Taps on Armistice Day came through the open window: "What's that?"

You will know that they will not, some years hence, in an English class, look up puzzled and say, "The Cross? What Cross?"

GENERAL SEMANTICS IN READING INSTRUCTION

By

FRANCIS P. CHISHOLM

I suppose that most schools now recognize that teaching students to read more closely and effectively is one of their primary duties. This duty, of course, has always been explicitly recognized by the elementary school. Teachers of older students, however, have often built their practices on the assumption that "learning to read" is something which their students did (or should have done) once and for all in their elementary school careers. Basic reading skill could be expected of high-school and college students, who then proceeded to "more difficult reading matter" and amassed a "larger vocabulary" to deal with "more complex ideas."

This point-of-view has now been rather thoroughly discredited in secondary education, where, at least in theory, teaching reading is the responsibility of every teacher in the school, and not the job of the English teacher alone. High-schools no longer assume that reading is something their students "passed" sometime ago in another grade. Whether the high-schools are actually building flexible and powerful "reading habits" in their students is perhaps in doubt, but their recognition of their responsibility is almost unanimous.

Colleges have been somewhat slower in accepting the same responsibility toward their students: until recently, in actual practice, the universal English One was supposed to "take care of" any reading "deficiencies," despite the fact few faculty-members, least of all the English teachers, were satisfied with the results. At the present time, many colleges are experimenting with new methods of dealing with the "reading problem"; perhaps it is now the livest professional problem.

It is encouraging indeed to note this stir of professional interest, for it is a response to a social problem of the very first importance. A primitive tribe can take its language (and the attitudes enshrined in it) "for granted" in its relatively stable environment; but a modern democracy, whose citizens must adjust to (and help direct) social change, demands a citizenry which can interpret alertly and maturely the language in which its discussions take place. We live in a symbol-saturated culture: our ways of using and reacting to symbols, our ways of describing things, our ways of understanding statements, etc. (in a word, our neuro-semantic reactions) enter into every life-situation. Our distinguishing human characteristic is that we are symbol-users: it is probably impossible to overestimate the importance of training a mature and scientific use of this basic human tool.

I suppose that everyone would agree that the training we ourselves have, and which we are giving to others, is not good enough. I do not think it necessary to feel that pessimism (about the future or about "human nature") which to some people is a corollary: but we cannot help recognizing a kind of breakdown in our communicative machinery, whether we measure that by the growth of unbalanced and violent attitudes, by the apparent failure of many discussions to achieve agreement, or by some other measure of our own, such as the seemingly increasing proportion of obtuse readers among our students. We have made highly satisfactory progress toward universal literacy: but obviously literacy is not enough. Semantic maladjustment is, if anything, more common among the highly literate. Many contemporary events (the rise of demagogic dictators, the spectacular success of somewhat questionable advertising, etc.) suggest that perhaps literacy alone, without trained evaluation habits, may be a public danger.

Certainly any investigation of the reading skill of any sizeable group of college students or of adults is, at first glance, discouraging for people who have faith that social progress is guaranteed by formal education. For the tests re-

veal what every teacher dealing with the problem already knows: that there is a great gap between what the test passage "says" and what the students read in it. In classes, students are always ready and eager to "debate" and "discuss" an author's opinions: but, when they are asked simply to state what (good or bad, correct or incorrect) it was the author *said,* as many as 70% of many classes will be unable to give even a fairly accurate account. Opinions will be "read into" the passage. Then, the student reacts as if "what he read" was equal to "what the author says."

Sometimes the reader will project his own opinions, and see them reflected in what he reads. He credits the author with saying what "any intelligent man" (i.e., the reader) "must" say on that subject. Sometimes he will project into the passage what he feels the author "must have meant" in view of what the reader knows about him. Suppose that a corporation executive should write an article advocating increased governmental supervision of industrial production. Many people, knowing that the author was a "business man" and that "business men" are "against" government regulation, are quite capable of summing up this article as "a defense of the free enterprise system against interference by the government." No amount of merely textual commentary will teach students who read in this way to do any better. The teacher, by explaining the text of the essay, may straighten them out on this particular passage, but they will repeat the pattern of their errors the next time they read.

Note what people who misread this "business man" are doing. They are assuming that the connotations which *they* have for a class-name ("business man") *necessarily* describe every individual to whom the name can be applied. To put it another way, the generalizations which they have made about a class of individuals (no matter how these definitions have been made) describe each individual in the class without the further necessity of observing those separate individuals at all. This is equivalent to reacting to the actual world *as if* it hap-

pened to be the world of stereotypes, political cartoons, etc. It is important to notice that the misreading has occurred, not through ignorance, but through a disordered semantic reaction; the error has occurred because the reader's attitude toward symbols is radically immature.

A careful observer will be able to add many examples to like behavior from discussions he has listened to. A very frequent pattern in discussion consists of an answer by B, not to A's statement, but to what B feels that A "must have meant." To illustrate this pattern, I transcribe a conversation I had recently with a student:

> People with college educations (the student said) know more, and hence are better judges of people.
>
> But aren't you assuming (I asked) that a college education gives not only what we usually call 'knowledge,' but also what we usually call 'shrewdness' or 'wisdom?'
>
> Oh, you mean that there isn't any use in going to college!

This pattern, filled in by the context of the conversation, accounts for a very large number of misinterpretations, misquotations, misrepresentations, etc., from which each of us has suffered at some time or other. Its existence suggests that many verbal distortions, which we are accustomed to interpret angrily as being malignantly motivated, may occur because so many people have trained themselves in inadequate and disintegrated semantic reactions. This students' response to my remark depends upon a long previous training of the student, which has resulted in the habitual behavior of reacting to every situation as if that situation could have only two values. I "must be" *either* praising *or* disparaging "college education": since my remark did not sound like praise, I therefore "must think" that college is "no good."

It is easy enough in a classroom situation to treat examples of misreading as if the reactions involved were matters of

words alone, and hence "serious" only in so far as they prejudice the student's success in a course. But the issues involved are much wider. In such situations the student is reacting to something (a remark, a sentence) as if it were something else (what he "thought" it was); furthermore, he is unaware that the latter is, or *can be,* something other than the former. Now this is serious, for this unawareness, this reacting to an inaccurate picture of the situation (a picture nevertheless "thought to be" accurate) is characteristic of frustration-producing experiences.

These considerations suggest that the problem of "teaching reading" will be solved reasonably well only with a much wider framework than that within which it has been traditionally approached. Within the school, reading is not a "subject," but rather a basic skill, prerequisite to full participation in school and community life. In a written passage, someone has made some statements to the reader about something. No doubt the primary responsibility for "clarity of expression" lies with the writer; but nevertheless the writer's effort, like the speaker's, is eventually at the mercy of the *reader's* set of habitual reactions. Communication between individuals (essential to the co-operative solving of our largely symbolic *human* problems) can be as quickly abolished by unskillful (i.e., disordered) reading and listening as by confused writing and speaking.

Unfortunately, it has been traditional to try to solve the problem of teaching reading by beginning with the content of the language passages: i.e., reading has been treated as primarily a process of apprehending the "meaning of words." Many teachers seem to think of reading as if it were a passive process, by which the "meaning" of the passage is registered in the student if he "knows" the words. But human beings are not cameras, nor are words the kind of stimuli which unequivocally carry their own "meanings" with them. Whatever techniques we adopt must be based upon the scientific knowledge that the reading process is an active organization

by the reader, suggested to him by the sentences he reads, but formed into a "meaningful" experience by the pattern of his *own* reactions.

Hence, if we find unsatisfactory reading, we must make our specific diagnosis in terms of the reader's trained reactions to symbol situations: we cannot solve it by analysis of language *alone.* The problem is in the reader, not in the content of the passage he is reading.

And, in the reader, what we must be concerned with is not what too many teachers worry about: "lack of vocabulary," ignorance of "ideas", etc. Ignorance and inexperience are relatively curable, given a workable method *in the student.* What the teacher of reading must be concerned with is the pattern of the student's reaction to symbol-situations, his attitude toward language, his *evaluating* of what he reads: in other words, the ordering of his neuro-semantic reactions. If a student is to learn to read well, to overcome primitive behavior in language-situations, he must be trained to react maturely: he must acquire habits of proper evaluation. For it is the pattern of his active, habitual experiences which organizes "what the passage says" into what the passage "means" to him.

If we are to learn to teach (and not merely advocate) "intelligent reading," we must, I am convinced, deal with students on this fundamental level. And doing this involves reexamining our assumptions about what we are doing, so that we can take advantage of the large quantity of new knowledge about the human use of symbols which has been discovered during the last generation. This knowledge is essentially knowledge of the mechanisms and processes involved in human reaction to (symbolically-organized) situations. Intelligent, mature, skillful reading involves some knowledge of the relations between symbols and what the symbols are symbols "of," of human methods of organizing (perceiving) and symbolizing situations, of the life-effects of semantic habits, of the mechanisms and processes which underlie behaving with symbols, etc.

This knowledge is the content of the science of general semantics, which supplies for the teacher of reading that "wider basis" for a solution which we have just mentioned, and in addition suggests a large number of empirically tested and immediately useable devices.

II

The problem of general semantics is to make clear the processes by which human beings formulate situations in symbols and react to these linguistic formulations. In other words, it is the science of language-fact relationship and the processes underlying communication. But, as Alfred Korzybski has shown conclusively, the problem is much more than an abstract logical problem. As general semantics is formulated in his pioneer text and in the work of his collaborators, it deals also (and inescapably, since this is part of a single unified problem) with the life-implications of linguistic formulation.

All this, you may say, sounds rather complex and formidable; what does it have to do with the immediate classroom problem of teaching students to read at least a little better? Well, first of all, the greatest immediate obstacle in the way of any attempt to improve reading is the reader's unconsciousness of the mechanism and structure of his disordered semantic reactions. The assumptions which underlie his faulty reading are unconscious (and hence uncontrollable): he is unable to see how the "meaning" he found in the passage, or his reaction to it, can be faulty or inadequate.

Therefore, training in general semantics is a very powerful technique for improving "reading habits" as well as other reactions to symbols. For general semantics provides techniques for making conscious (and therefore *controllable*) the unconscious assumptions which lead to improper evaluation. It has been shown empirically that understanding the nature of language-situations is itself a very powerful developer of more mature reaction-patterns, and hence of more adequate "command of the language" and response to symbols. The probable

explanation of this fact is that so large a proportion of inadequate language-reactions stem from a "misunderstanding" of language-fact relationships. (I put the word in quotation marks to indicate that I do not necessarily mean a conscious misunderstanding. It is not a matter of holding a false theory, but rather of proceeding *on the basis* of a silent assumption about language which is not in accord with empirical fact.)

Every observer of language-behavior can call up examples of such "misunderstandings" of language-fact relationships. One of those most commonly met in teaching reading is the "one word—one meaning" fallacy. Suppose a class is directed to read an essay in which, among other things, the author states that he believes that college education should develop "open and enquiring, *skeptical* habits of enquiry." Many students in that class will read that the author advocates atheism, religious disbelief, etc. If some one objects that the interpretation doesn't seem to fit the context, these students will triumphantly announce: "But that's what he says! That's what *skepticism* means!"

Such a pattern of reaction has been reenforced by many social factors (such as the still prevalent school-marmish worship of "the dictionary"), but most of all by the silent assumption that words are more important than what words point to. It is easy enough to show students by examples, by exercises in paraphrase, that no word *ever* has the "same meaning." But even that does not break him of the unscientific (and dangerous) habit of feeling that the way to solve a problem is to arrive at an agreed definition of a *word.*

Yet, certainly, for adequate reading, the question for the student to consider is not "*the* meaning" of any word (skepticism, democracy, cat, dog, the Chrysler Building, etc.), but rather what the words *as the author uses them* are symbols of. This point is crucial, because it involves the relationship of symbols and events. Unless the reader understands it, he can only see in what he reads the reflection of his own "meaning" for words. Furthermore, he will constantly be led astray in

his reaction to what he reads. If the author uses a given word (skepticism) to indicate A (inquisitiveness) whereas I would have used it to indicate B (religious disbelief), I, as a reader, will only be thrown off from considering what he said (deep or shallow, good or bad) by study based on trying to find out what "skepticism" "really means."

Empirical evidence shows that we can train more adequate habits in a reader if we give him a structural explanation of the language-fact relationships involved. One such structural fact about language, for example, which is basic to a scientific general semantics, is that there is no necessary connection between the "things" of the world and the words we use to describe them. You don't eat the printed restaurant menu. Any linguistic formulation is only a kind of map of something which, whatever it is, is *not* the words used to describe it.

III

The first immediate importance of general semantics in the teaching of reading is to furnish the student with some *structural* notions of the relations of language and "facts." If he is confusing definitions and events, formulations and realities, the explanation of his confusion helps him to overcome it. His infantile feeling (that certain words *have* to go with certain situations) becomes something he can deal with and change only after a structural explanation enables him to see what his present habits assume. For until it is made conscious, it is just part of the situation to him, something forming the situation of whose existence he is unaware.

Nobody "really believes" that symbols dominate and control "nature" (the assumption of primitive magic) or that some words equal reality (identification of formulation and thing formulated); but many people continue to *behave* in a manner which assumes these beliefs, without realizing that they are so behaving.

In general semantics, symbols are considered as being on different levels. Korzybski's basic teaching analogy is the com-

parison of a statement to a map, which may be "good" or "bad," depending on how it reflects the structure of the territory. But, good or bad, the map is *not* the territory, nor does it tell *all* about the territory. Furthermore, we can have maps of maps (statements about statements) indefinitely.

My own experience has been that this explanation reduces considerably and immediately the amount of "misreading" among college students. The various "misreadings" which come from feeling that a word must always "mean" the same tend to disappear when students begin to feel that statements are on different levels. Many of them begin to develop the ability to see "through" the words to what the author is talking about.

It is, of course, on the interpretation of very highly abstract words (more accurately, high-order abstractions) that most students have difficulty in reading. Such words are often symbols for semantic disturbance, or attempts to create semantic disturbance: this fact has led some people to "distrust" all high-order abstractions. In students we find, just as often as we find a belief in "real meanings," a feeling that no word on a higher level than "dog" or "cat" *can* be used "meaningfully."

Instruction in general semantics performs a very useful function for these readers. Very few of them have ever considered the difficulties involved in the symbolic formulation of situations; most of them in addition have been prevented from understanding language-fact relationships by their own unconscious assumptions about those relationships. My student, whom I mentioned earlier, who concluded that I "must be" either "praising" or "blaming" college education, had this rigid reaction because of just such an assumption. Even a little discussion about non-identity, levels of statement, functions of language etc., makes the evaluations of many of them more flexible.

This last result brings us back to what I feel to be the prime importance of general semantics for the teaching of reading: that it keeps our consideration (and our students')

riveted on the question of the structure of the reader's reaction. It cannot be repeated too often that misreading, being in the reader, cannot be cured in the text. I have found that it is helpful to teach some facts about the structure of human reactions to symbols as well as those about language-fact relationships we have just discussed. It is necessary to repeat this, and to insist on it so strongly, because, in most of us who handle the reading problem professionally, the language-centered tradition of our training is so strong that it seems more "natural" to approach the problem from the direction of language.

But in fact, in social action, in education, etc., what counts is not what the text "means" in the abstract, what the author or speaker "meant to say." If I listen to a lecturer, what I go away quoting him as saying, what I actually "heard" him say (even though it is far from what he "meant") is what he has communicated to me.

Hence, unskilled listening, misunderstanding, etc., on my part prevents exact communication. It leads to radical misevaluation by me of the speaker and of the speaker's words; it leads me to action based upon a false formulation of the situation. The whole incident may be a trivial one, but in principle it is serious. (What difference would there have been in contemporary history had a large proportion of Germans reacted to Hitler's talk of the "Greater German Reich" as if the symbol represented a semantic disturbance in Hitler rather than as if it represented a "reality?") I have my "meaning", "opinions," my ways of reacting to symbols. But I may be completely ignorant of how I achieved these "opinions," and quite unconscious of the *structure* of my reactions to symbols presented to me. Unless these considerations are called to my attention, I will be simply unable to see how my reaction to the speaker, what I "heard," what I feel and do, *can* be "wrong." I "heard what he said," and "any normal human being" would of course react just as I did.

What must the student know to transcend this communi-

cation-defeating attitude? General semantics (and the results of those who have taught it to students) suggests several techniques. The student must learn *not* to respond to symbols as if they were signals for immediate invariable total reactions; that is, he must transcend "signal reactions" such as those displayed by Pavlov's animals or by choleric humans whose blood-pressure rises when the name of the opposition political party is mentioned. He must learn to check or delay his response until he relates the symbols to some real situation other than his own inner trained likes and dislikes.

To do this, he needs two different kinds of knowledge and training. First of all he needs to know something of the "neuro-semantic" side of general semantics: he must see the difference between signal (automatic) and symbol reactions. Without structural explanation, advice to the student to delay his response to his reading, not to "burst out with hasty opinions," not to assume that his first reading is "what it says," etc., remains merely good advice: excellent, something to which he will "agree," but which he will have no technique at all for carrying out. As formulated in general semantics, attainment of mature symbol reactions is not an "ideal" to be praised, but becomes a problem for the student to solve.

Second, the student needs to realize the indivisibility, the unitary "body-mind" character of his reaction to symbols, which is often concealed from him by conventional instruction in language in the abstract. A little study shows how, in fact, we learn our language, how, with our vocabulary, we absorb attitudes and valuations suggested by the weightings ("emotional connotations") which the words have in the social groups we belong to. Such study brings home to the student very rapidly the total-organic nature of language-reactions. It also has the effect of making him more sensitive to the shadings and weightings which the author put on the words. He can begin to look on what he reads as a map of *something* and judge it on that basis as good, bad, significant, misleading, deep, shallow, etc., rather than giving his immediate reaction

to it on the basis of how closely it corresponds to the pattern of signal reactions which he happens to bring to it.

IV

In this brief treatment it is impossible to indicate more than a few of the general areas in which general semantics is useful for teacher and student of reading. Nor is it possible to give anything but a misleading account of general semantics itself. I am very conscious that a short article like this one does not help anyone at once to apply general semantics to reading instruction in the specific circumstances in which he works. I hope though that enough has been said to indicate that the *methodological* synthesis of knowledge (scientific, linguistic, epistemological, etc.) achieved in general semantics furnishes the basis for a broader and more adequate solution of the acute problem of teaching reading.

For all evidence points to the conclusion that, if we are to achieve what we hope for in reading instruction, we must include evaluation factors as well as training in word-recognition. The communication process involves both speakers and listeners, writers and readers, using a socially-constructed symbol-system, in whose structure "reality" must be represented. This communication-process can never be even reasonably effective until the attitude of *both* parties toward their mutual language is reasonably mature; but the process can be destroyed more easily by listeners than by speakers. A wise man can learn from a fool, but a fool cannot learn from a wise man unless he ceases to be a fool.

We must guard against the notion that the problem of teaching reading in schools is confined to a number of verbally-awkward students, those who usually end up in "remedial reading" clinics. Inadequate vocabulary, semi-literacy, a poor command of the technical terms of a field, etc., are not the only indications of a need for "remedial instruction" in reading. Signal-reactions, inability to relate language to territory, and other neuro-semantic disorders are often combined with

brilliant verbal facility. Some students do not so much read a passage as make it the stimulus for producing a verbal pattern touched off by their own personal reaction to the original *words.*

The final point which I want to make here in regard to general semantics in reading instruction is that general semantics brings scientific justification for a belief which English teachers have always held: the vital social and personal importance of language-instruction. (The corollary drawn by some English teachers, that the kind of instruction which most of us now give is adequate, does not however follow.) The pattern of an individual's neuro-semantic reactions underlies his personal adjustment and his social action: infantile reactions to symbols (including inadequate reading) are symptoms of a wider immaturity of personality. Hence language-instruction should always be undertaken in the wider context of the total reaction of the *student,* which is exactly what many great English teachers have long advocated. General semantics gives us the validated techniques for tackling our job on this fundamental basis.

Perhaps the best way to finish an article like this one on the importance of general semantics is to suggest a short list of readings for the study of general semantics. This list is not a full "bibliography" but is only meant to notice a few available books. Teachers wishing to apply general semantics seriously should consult the fuller bibliographies in these books. They should also inquire concerning pamphlets and reprints which are available at these two sources:

Institute of General Semantics, 1234 East 56th Street, Chicago 37.

ETC.: A Review of General Semantics, Editorial Offices, 3300 Federal Street, Chicago 16.

The pioneer and still definitive text is Korzybski's; also noted in this list are works of his students and co-workers and other methodologically-sound books dealing with problems important to teachers of communication. All are available

from their publishers or from the Institute of General Semantics.

Bell, Eric T. THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH. Reynal & Hitchcock, 1934.

Chisholm, Francis P. INTRODUCTORY LECTURES ON GENERAL SEMANTICS. Institute of General Semantics, Chicago, 1944.

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Lee, Irving J. LANGUAGE HABITS IN HUMAN AFFAIRS: AN INTRODUCTION TO GENERAL SEMANTICS. Harper & Bros., N. Y., 1941.

Preston, George H. THE SUBSTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH. Farrar & Rinehart, New York, 1943.

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WHY CALL IT REMEDIAL WORK?

By

H. P. MAYNARD

The mother was worried about her son. We had been discussing his educational problems for some time. Finally she said, "Son, you run along outside for a few minutes." He had scarcely closed the door when she turned to me and said, "Tell me why he has done so poorly on his placement tests. Does it mean he is not intelligent and that he has not the mental capacity to go on to a higher level in his academic work?"

It may be heartening news to many parents that this pattern is prevalent in many cases and in almost all of them it is the boy's lack of previous training rather than a lack of inherent ability which is causing the trouble.

Let us go on with this typical case. The boy has applied for admission to school. He has been given an Otis Intelligence Test, which is a written, timed test. He has also been given subject tests in English, mathematics, and a foreign language or a history. His intelligence test shows him to be in the lowest quarter of boys rated throughout the country. He fails his other examinations and appears to be a poor candidate from the scholastic point of view. He is an outstanding boy, however, when considered from another angle. He is honest, sincere, and desirous of bettering himself. He has personality, character, and integrity which will eventually mark him as an outstanding man in his community or even in his country. In fact, he is just the type of boy we feel deserves the benefits of an endowed school.

Our next problem is to discover what is back of the poor results on the placement examinations. He is given more

searching tests which allow us to determine whether those results came through poor training in his previous schooling, or through some "block" in his mental make-up which has hindered him from making normal progress.

The first step is to check the results of the written intelligence test by giving him an oral intelligence test. In almost every case we shall find that a boy's intelligence rating will improve when the questions are read to him by the examiner. There is, of course, a definite reason for this improvement. The average child is not a perfect reader. He may read very slowly; he may read inaccurately; he may even lack power of concentration to such a degree that he cannot keep his mind on one sentence long enough to get the meaning from it. Thus the child's reading ability colors every question he is asked and does not give a true picture of his over-all intelligence. Imagine yourself obliged to make an intelligence rating on a test written in French when you had only a nodding acquaintance with that language. You probably would not be able to answer the simplest facts. Now suppose some one who could translate French translated the questions orally for you. You would find that your rating would jump considerably and be much nearer the proper level. We find that this boy showed a very low rating on the *written* test, but jumped to a superior rating on the *oral* test. We have put our finger almost immediately upon the source of some of his trouble. Without further testing we may tell the mother that her son has better-than-average intelligence and should be able to go on to do a higher level of academic work.

One might think that our work is over, but this is far from true. We have merely placed the learning "block" somewhere in the *reading* zone. We must now attempt to find the specific cause for this "block" and remedy it. The boy is next given tests which will allow us to find his grade placement in a number of fundamental learning skills. For example, the boy may be in the eighth grade. We may find that he is capable of doing ninth grade work in arithmetic computation where he

deals only with numbers, but he may drop to sixth grade level in his ability to do the reasoning-type problems which bring into play his reading skill. His vocabulary skill may be at the tenth grade level, because he might well develop this skill by listening to intelligent discussions at home. In contrast, his spelling skill might be found at the third grade level, because here again the reading or writing skill would have some play. One of the most important skills is that of writing-speed. If his writing-speed happened to be below his normal grade placement the handicap would be great because so many tests are *timed* tests. Thus a speedy reader or writer will finish his test before the time limit is up. If the test is well planned by the examiner, the average boy will complete the test; but the slow reader or writer, though he may be able to answer most of the questions, will find himself only part way through the test when the papers are collected.

We have now learned that this boy has a superior intelligence-rating on an oral test as compared with a poor rating on a written test. He is well prepared in arithmetic computation and in English vocabulary skills, but weak in those skills which necessitate reading or writing—such as spelling, arithmetic, reasoning problems, reading comprehension, etc. In other words, the only trouble with this boy is that he has not laid the bricks well for a foundation for his scholastic work. Much to the parent's delight, as well as my own, I am able to say that there is no reason why this boy cannot be prepared to carry a higher level of study.

It is now time to apply the remedy. One might almost say that a rather mature student will go back into the third grade and take his spelling, and into the sixth grade and take his arithmetic reasoning problems again. Of course this is not literally practical, nor would it be a wise move if it could be done. At that age children progress year by year in these skills, whereas we have found that a mature student under proper tutelage progresses by months, when he applies himself to certain definite skills. It is not unusual for a boy to bring his

spelling, reading, or writing skills up from two to three years by grade placement-measure by a full summer's work.

This remedy seems almost too simple, but we must not lose sight of the fact that there are pit-falls to be avoided. When a boy of fifteen goes back to do the work at third grade level in any skill he is likely to feel the whole thing is silly. In many cases this has been the deciding factor against the necessary improvement which would eventually allow the boy to go on from where we found him. He feels he is too big a boy to be doing such foolish stuff. If he can persuade Dad that there is no sense to the whole thing, the whole program is defeated.

You have no doubt heard of "remedial work" with its attendant scientific names such as strephosymbolia, mirror vision, etc. Don't let this talk make you feel that educators of today are all making passes in the air and saying Abracadabra if you bring your son to them for advice. Nine chances out of ten, there is nothing the matter with your son, except that somewhere along the way he has missed learning some of the skills necessary for his further education. Although this is a serious matter, it can be very easily remedied and it *must* be if he is to carry the load imposed by higher education. Just as the height of a house depends upon the depth and strength of its foundation, so the degree of education attainable in any instance depends upon this foundation of learning skills. It is not necessary to call this correction "remedial work"; it could better be called foundational repair.

THE CALAMITIES OF BETTY

READING AND THE TREATMENT OF PERSONALITY DISORDERS

By
THOMAS V. MOORE, S. J.

Mankind has been interested in dealing with the problems of the mind by reading, perhaps from the very days when books first came into existence. At all events, the library at Thebes bore this inscription ψυχῆς ἰατρεῖον [1] a healing place for the soul. So no attempt in our day to treat personality disorders by reading can lay any claim to being an essentially new departure.

What stimulated me to think over the problem was an accidental occurrence. I spent the spring of 1939 in England and said Mass at times on Sunday for a Catholic family that lived in a large country mansion and had in their house their own private chapel. In one visit to this beautiful country home I noticed a few books lying on a table covered with manila paper and labeled in large letters: SERVANTS' LIBRARY. I became interested in seeing what kind of books were chosen for the servants' library and glanced through them. They constituted a little sequel of novels in which the main theme was the calamities of Betty who stole butter and various such articles from the store house. Though the crudity of this attempt at bibliotherapy could not help but strike me as amusing, nevertheless, for some reason the problem of treating behavior disorders by reading kept recurring to my mind. Surely there must be some better material than the calamities of Betty.

I approached various libraries and gathered the impression that at least some of those who work with selecting books for children had mainly before their mind the objective of getting children interested in reading. To attain this end they

felt that one must carefully avoid any attempt to preach to children through books. Furthermore, I found that a great deal of children's literature is nothing but innocent nonsense and seems to be void of any religious or moral value. But should this be? It seemed to me that there are opportunities for those who write children's literature to instruct as well as amuse and that a number of writers have availed themselves of this opportunity without having fallen into the crudities of the calamities of Betty.

One who gives a great deal of time to one field of investigation is likely to be profoundly ignorant of other fields. He knows what is going on in other fields by hearsay and glancing over an article that happens to come his way. I wish to confess to this profound ignorance of Education and English literature but from my hearsay information it seems that a profound change has come over education. It has become very practical and utilitarian. One has to be prepared for a job. A secretary should know how to spell, but ordinarily she does not have to produce a masterpiece of English literature which her boss reads as an essay of his own. Have the days passed when the student was called upon, not only to translate the Latin and Greek classics, but also to produce a translation which, while being true to the original by a deft choice of words, was also a magnificent piece of English in itself?

And then, were there not days when moral ideals were in some way made to glow with the brightness of classic antiquity and seemed all the more wonderful and desirable because of the literary beauty with which they were clothed? Is it true that the study of languages has for its main object the attempt to enable the student to travel and do business in a foreign land and no longer converges in the development of the power to give expression to thoughts in masterful English? Is it true that moral education is no longer an objective at all, let alone a superior aim that transcends even the imparting of knowledge and the development of the power of expression? There was a day when normal education was an

objective even in the copy books which the children used in learning how to write and spell.

Are we face to face with a current philosophy which is sensationalistic in its psychology and utilitarian in its moral outlook on life? Sensationalism does not admit the existence of general principles so it is idle to raise the question of their moral value or to attempt to inculcate them. Is it true that any such attempt is becoming more and more rare in the school and in the home? "Consider," says one writer, "the disappearance of mottoes from the kitchen wall and that incredible loss to the structural framework of social character, the vanished Spencerian copy book which was for our day a modern version of Aesop's Fables, whose wise saws have done so much to epitomize laudable conduct from the past, for the present and the future. 'God bless our home' has vanished along with 'Honesty is the best policy;' 'Practice makes the master'; 'A penny saved is a penny earned'; 'A stitch in time saves nine'."[2]

It is not for us to consider now whether these things have really passed away or whether they were effective means of character training or whether better means are now available. But I would like to point out that the human mind does harbor ideals and principles and that it is a matter of prime importance to develop in the mind of the child worth-while ideals and true principles. In a study made by Betke in our Department it was found that non-delinquent boys solve moral problems by sound ethical principles much more frequently than do delinquent boys and the difference is statistically significant.[3] Occasionally a delinquent boy chooses for himself a false ideal. Some time ago a number of boys in an institution for delinquents were asked among other things to name their greatest hero. One boy named Dillinger as his ideal. It is easily seen that with such an ideal our adolescent is likely to manifest some abnormality of conduct. There is a great deal of empirical evidence to show that false ideals and principles have something to do with abnormalities of behavior.

II

Thinking over possibilities of treatment for those who manifest personality disorders led me to recall the calamities of Betty and to seek a better type of bibliotherapy. Eventually I asked Miss Clara Kircher of the Public Library in Newark to work out for me a bibliography which might help me in my attempts to treat the problem child.

Such a bibliography had certain fundamental demands:

1. The books must be interesting in themselves and provide easy reading on the level of the reader;
2. Each book must be assigned to its grade level and so labeled;
3. There must be a subject index giving in alphabetical order the main problems for which children come to a child guidance clinic.

The idea back of the method is that when one knows the problem with which the child is confronted, he picks a book in which the child can read of someone who met the same difficulty which the child is suffering and handled it in a satisfactory manner. It is hoped that the child will himself see from reading the book the true way of dealing with his problem and set out on that way without any more ado. In my experience with the technique, I find that when a child is in the acute stage of any problem he is likely to read his problem into almost any book somewhere, even though one familiar with the book did not see at first sight that it had anything specifically to do with the child's problem. It is however a great help to have a bibliography such as Miss Kircher prepared for me and the books at hand to offer the child. Most children are very glad to take a book home.

From my experience also it seems that most children read for interest only and do not crystallize out of their reading any principles of conduct. It does not follow, however, that

random reading of good books is of little or no ethical value. Thus one learns something by random experience, though he would have learned a great deal more had he been directed by one who knew how to point out things of value.[4]

It seems to be a matter of special value to ask the child to tell you what the story was about and then by questioning to lead the child to formulate the appropriate mental principle. It is very interesting to note that it is one thing for a principle to gain admittance to the mind and be accepted as logically true but it demands something more for the principle to become an actual and practical guide of conduct.

Thus, in one of my early attempts at bibliotherapy I loaned a boy Hubert Skidmore's *Hill Doctor.* The eleven and a half year old youngster was having such violent scenes with the lady with whom his mother shared a house that it seemed that his mother would have to move elsewhere. Furthermore, he was very selfish towards his smaller brother, never allowing the little fellow to handle or play with his toys; finally he was not studying at school and got down in the dumps when he was scolded. He came for a number of visits and we had a chat about what he had learned from the Hill Doctor. In the first interview after he had been given the book he said that he had learned that the Hill Doctor worked among poor country people but no matter how poor they were they shared whatever they had with anyone who needed it. This is mentioned in the most incidental way in Skidmore's novel; and our boy's calling attention to it as a major item is perhaps an example of how one reads into a book rather than out of it his own personal problems. I might have asked at once, "Would it not be reasonable, therefore, for you to share your things with your little brother". But I did not. Somewhat later he complained about the lady with whom the family lived, scolding him. And I asked him for what. He replied, "For teasing my little brother and taking his toys without asking him and not allowing him to play with mine."

Here, I thought, was my opportunity to recall to his mind

what he had learned from the hill folk who shared whatever they had with anybody else. And so I asked if the example of the hill folk did not suggest that he should share his things with his little brother. He answered right away, "Not a bit of it!" "Why?" I queried. He replied, "If I ever let him have anything I will never get it back." I let the matter drop, making no attempt to argue the point.

The incident is very instructive. It shows that principles may enter the mind and be accepted as true and even admirable; but they are not allowed, for all that, to be a factor in determining conduct. We must not, however, become discouraged but go on with our attempt to develop sound principles in the mind of the child and if we can do nothing to make them become determiners of conduct, to hope that in some way that principles once planted will in due season be activated. This is precisely what happened in our problem boy. Somewhat later, in talking over the *Hill Doctor,* he told me how a boy wanted to take care of the hill doctor's horse because he liked the horse so much. The doctor thought he was too small and at first said no. The little fellow begged and so the doctor finally consented just to make him happy.

I asked, "Have you applied that principle to yourself?"

He answered, "Yes."

I asked, "How?"

"If my little brother wants to do something and I don't want him to, I should let him do it just to make the little fellow happy." And then, without waiting for further questions, he blurted out, "I have done this several times already."

"How?"

"He likes to sit on my bike and work the pedals. It makes him think he's driving. I used to make him get off but now I let him work the pedals just because it makes him happy. I also let him play with lots of other things."[5]

And so we see that further reading has activated an important moral truth which has passed from a logical principle to a moral maxim influencing conduct. It might be well to

note that the incident about the doctor, the horse, and the little boy, while occurring in Skidmore's novel has been embellished to such an extent that Skidmore would not recognize it. It is another example of how the child reads his problem into the book and if it is not there in proper form the imagination of the child weaves in details of his own creation and unconsciously produces an incident that satisfies his personal needs.

One might remark, too, that what a child picks out of a book is often what is incidental and trivial as far as the plot and the main thought of the novel is concerned. Freud has pointed out that the dreamer selects just such trivialities in the experience of the previous day as the starting point of the dream. There is something in the incident that has a direct analogy with the major problems in the life of the dreamer and it is this analogous something which initiates the dream. In a very similar way the child's attention is caught by incidents which touch his personal problems. He seems to ponder them unconsciously and in so doing he adds to them in imagination and the resulting complex is very like a dream but a dream that is remembered as an incident that was read about in a book. Psychiatrists term such falsifications "pseudo-hallucinations of memory."

In an early interview the boy told me that when the Hill Doctor was in medical school he had someone to stand over him when he was doing an operation and make sure he did it right. When corrected he did not get angry. All this is read into the story by the boy. I said nothing; but, in a later interview when we were talking over his sensitiveness to correction, I reminded him of what he told me about the Hill Doctor and suggested that the next time he was scolded it might be well to say, "Thank you. I will try to do better." My advice seemed utterly thrown away, for in several subsequent interviews I learned of violent emotional scenes when he had been corrected. But after a dormant period of varying lengths seeds finally do sprout. So some weeks later he suddenly turned

from telling me about his improvement in school work to blurt out, "Say, you know that trick you taught me last time?" I was not conscious of having taught him anything which in my language I would call a "trick," and so I asked, "What trick?"

"You told me," he said, "that when anybody scolded me I should say, 'Thank you. I'll try to do better.' My aunt scolded me and I tried it out on her. It worked like hot magic. She was so proud. She went out and bought Joe and me Coca-Cola and peanuts and let me stay up till half-past ten."[6]

It is sometimes possible to get a child to read the right book at the right time and bring about a happy solution to an emotional crisis which threatened to end in a dangerous piece of foolish conduct. A sixteen year old girl had been coming to the Child Center at the Catholic University for epileptic seizures. She came in for one interview rather tense emotionally and announced her intention of leaving home.

"I am sixteen," she said, "and I am going out to get a job and have my own little room all to myself."

There had been a fuss between her father and her grandmother, in the course of which her father told his mother to get out of the house. Our patient defended her grandmother and told her father that he had lived all these years with his mother and had no right now to tell her to get out of the house. So the father then became angry with his daughter and told her that she could get out along with her grandmother. And now she said, "I am determined to do so."

I first tried talking things over attempting by ordinary methods to bring about a better understanding but I could not budge her resolution to leave home and go to work.

I then thought of bibliotherapy and suggested a compromise.

"Go to school, just for two weeks. Read a book; write me what you think of it and see me at the end of the two weeks."

I let her take home *Land Spell* by Gladys Hasty Carroll. Some days later I received the following letter:

> "I read the book and now I see what you mean. I must have my education in order to go out and face the world. I realize now that I must take a step down for happiness. I know now that the man who said 'Pride goeth before the fall' was really right. I have gone to school now for a week and I can truthfully say that I have never had a better time. Dr. Moore, I think my daddy really loves me now and doesn't want me to leave.
>
> I hope you are well and happy and please say hello to your nice secretary for me. Lots of love."

I then loaned her *A Bend in the Road* by Margaret Raymond. It is the story of a girl who left home after being whipped by her father and got a job in a factory. It pictures vividly the difficulties she had in living on such a small salary and introduces from time to time the much better lot of those who have been blessed by the opportunities of education. This is never pointed out explicitly but the reader can scarcely fail to see that an uneducated girl attempting to leave home and "go it alone" through life must expect hard and dreary years in a desert land from which there is little hope of any escape.

I asked her when she came back what she got out of the book and so she outlined for me the plot. I then asked, "But what did you get out of it *for yourself?*"

She answered by enumerating a few practical conclusions.

"It shows me that losing my temper is pretty silly.

I don't think I should leave home.

I learned that my father loves me even though he is gruff on the outside."

We followed along with various books all of which she read with interest; but I never heard anything more about leaving home and going to work and "leading my life my way" as she once expressed it.

III

Who is to make use of bibliotherapy? Is it a technique that only the psychiatrist can handle with safety?

To me it seems that it is a technique that can be used with good effects by parents as well as teachers, provided they are equipped with a full amount of common sense and have a kindly personal interest in the welfare of the child. Strange to say, one cannot take for granted a kindly personal interest in the welfare of the child even in the case of parents. Though it seems to me that any teacher or librarian with common sense and a warm personal interest in the welfare of children can make good use of bibliotherapy, I have been confronted with the objection that no school could make use of this technique without the services of a psychiatrist. I cannot share this opinion.

There is, I believe, a good deal of discussion going on at the present time about ways and means of introducing character-training into the school. To me there seem to be many important possibilities opened up by bibliotherapy, particularly to the teachers of English literature. With a subject index of novels[7] that touch on the major problems of adolescence and the books available in the school library, any teacher or librarian who can spare a few minutes a week to chat with a boy or girl can help the problem student over many more or less serious emotional difficulties.

And may I now enter a plea for the creation of a better type of juvenile literature, characterized by the vivid, glowing portrayal of plain ordinary human beings struggling with the difficulties of life, failing perhaps, again and again but eventually working out a worth-while solution to typical problems of human experience?

The true value of such literary productions is going to depend to a very large extent on the author's philosophy of life. And if that is so, there must be much more in the teach-

ing of English than imparting the techniques of verbal expression of thought. In the courses in English one must learn how to think the highest thought and conceive the noblest of ideals and give expression to concepts in a masterful language that makes the writer; and to ideals, by virtues that make the man.

[1] Diodorus of Sicily i, 49, 3, Loeb Classical Library, Vol. I, p. 173. Diodorus lived in the first century B.C.

[2] John H. Stokes, M.D., "Some General Considerations Affecting Present-Day Sex and Sex Education Problems." Venereal Disease Information, 1944, No. 25, p. 200.

[3] Critical ratio 7.081. See Sister Mary Angela Betke, "Defective Moral Reasoning in Delinquency." Studies in Psychology and Psychiatry, 1944, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 89.

[4] *Cf.* T. V. Moore, *Cognitive Psychology.* Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1939, p. 508.

[5] T. V. Moore, *The Nature and Treatment of Mental Disorders,* Grune and Stratton, New York, 1943. pp. 227-8.

[6] T. V. Moore, *The Nature and Treatment of Mental Disorders,* p. 229.

[7] Miss Clara Kircher's index has been printed under the title: *Character Formation through Books: A Bibliography,* printed by the Library of the Catholic University of America, Brookland, D. C.

ON BOKYS FOR TO REDE

By

S. A. Nock

We are growing aware that education and living are pretty much one and the same. At least we know that education is not something that begins at the age of five in the first grade and continues by means of accumulation of marks until it is possible to get a handsomely engraved piece of paper. We do not, however, alter our habits and methods to fit our increased understanding. We are still too apt to think of only school days as "education", and to move our pupils from compartment to compartment as we have done for so many generations. It is odd that teachers of English are as conservative as any in making changes, because English is the one subject that cannot be shut up in a compartment, but is rather the context for every activity from algebra to baseball.

We are beginning to look to our schools to prepare a better-rounded human being than we used to expect. While it is true that education and living are very much the same, still it is in our school years that our chief business is learning from our elders a variety of knowledge and getting encouragement to prepare ourselves for subsequent living. Our schools used to be pretty well distinguished from one another according to the peculiar nature of the subjects taught, but now we are beginning to see that an educated man, or rather a man whose education has properly started, needs more than any particular type of school can offer.

A well-rounded individual has three abilities: to succeed in his chosen profession; to function reasonably in society; to exercise judgment in all matters that come to his attention, to evaluate them, and to enjoy them accordingly. Some types of

schools and curriculums have prepared first-rate apprentices to go out into various jobs, businesses, and professions. Others have encouraged social awareness. The schools and curriculums devoted to the liberal arts were supposed to encourage judgment.

Now we are looking for ways and means to turn out human beings from all our institutions, rather than mere apprentices or mere "Humanists". We see that if we are to make a success of life at all, we must have men and women, and not merely parts of them.

II

Of all those who are in this country engaged in the business of teaching, teachers of English have an ideal opportunity to accomplish much of what we want done. For instance, as has been said, whatever our activity, it must be set in a context of English. Whatever our business may be, we talk English, write English, read English. Whether it is understanding a foreman, or arranging for a shift from one method of chemical analysis to another, or writing a letter, English is the essential medium of communication.

Teachers of English may be perfectly aware of what a medium of communication is, although when one considers their traditional approach to the English language, one is inclined to doubt. Students, however, and certainly pupils in high school and grade school, have little opportunity to discover the nature of a medium of communication. They have no trouble in communicating, to be sure, in spite of the fact that their English teachers work so hard to discourage ease of communication. Our American young people, whether or not we approve altogether their method of doing so, are perfectly able to make themselves understood in most situations. Of the process they employ, however, when they make themselves understood, they have no idea.

It would be reasonable to suppose that teachers whose business is the medium of communication, would endeavor to

give their pupils some idea of what they are talking about when they teach "English"; but for generations, very few teachers have, apparently, tried to make young people understand the nature and the desirability of mathematics, or history, or above all, English. Such isolated "subjects" have been rammed down more or less receptive intellectual gullets in the hope of recognizable regurgitation. When this sort of conduct is combined with an insistence that a great deal of what a pupil does is wrong and what the teacher says is right, with no reasons given, it is no wonder that the teaching of English is no more successful than it is.

For it is not successful. If we spent as much time on Spanish as we do on English, we might expect our pupils to write and even speak pretty good Spanish. But many young people in school and out cannot even read English at the end of twelve or sixteen years of working at it — and it has only recently occurred to us to find out why they can't read!

Proper English is a business asset, whatever the business may be. It is to any one's advantage to understand just what his superior means when instructions are given, or to be able to give directions so that they may not be misunderstood. It is advantageous to speak well, to write well, and to comprehend easily. All this is platitudinous enough, to be sure; yet we do not seem to appreciate what the platitudes mean.

While it is often true that people can handle tools without knowing anything about them, or about just what results may be expected from their use, it is to be expected that intelligent use of tools is superior to unintelligent. The most universal instrument in all lines of work is language; yet most of us know nothing of what language is.

The semanticists, who might have done so much good in making their colleagues aware of the nature of language, and in encouraging an intelligent use of language, have failed to make the impression they might have made, presumably because they have become so entranced with the techniques and oddities of their discipline that they have forgotten everything

else. They are like their literary comrades, who spend so much time in finding out how Smollett paid his rent when he lived in Downing Street or whether Milton was an albino that they have neither time nor energy left for literature. The semanticists, if they will stop talking their professional lingo and start encouraging among teachers of English an appreciation of the nature of language, may be of great assistance in establishing knowledge of the instrument of communication we all use.

English teachers who understand the nature of language can be of more help to their pupils and students, because they will realize to some extent anyway that language is not something that follows rules of logic, or rules of grammar, or rules of any kind at all. Then they will be able to get down to the business of teaching the English language as it is, and of making clear to their pupils what is accomplished in the use of the language. They may even abandon their common practice of trying to encourage the use of somewhat unidiomatic, stilted English.

Proper English is a business asset; stilted English is not. Yet with the best of intentions English teachers have so long insisted on stilted English from their pupils that in self-defense the pupils have had to stick to slang. Colloquial English is very good English, for very good reasons. When our teachers approach the language with these facts in mind, they may get a lot farther than they do now.

At least their pupils and students may have a better chance of growing up to use English that will be a professional asset. Lively pupils will not leave schools using formal instead of colloquial English, and less lively ones will not live in a maze of grammatical tangles that make no sense to them, and trip them when they try to talk or write.

Whatever a man's work in the world, his English teacher can help him to succeed—if the teacher will set out to do so.

III

English is essential in every job, business, or profession because of its social application. It is for the same reason essential to an understanding of any problem of society. A man who is to take an intelligent position in his world must know a good deal about his world, must be able to understand those who discuss his world, and should be able on occasion to express himself on social matters so that other people know what he is talking about. Here again a knowledge of semantics is of value, if only because such knowledge enables a man to evaluate the discussions he sees or hears. It is unfortunate that teachers of English, who could hold the key to an understanding of social affairs, have set themselves completely apart from such social affairs and devoted their attention to matters of interest only to other teachers of English, and not to too many of them.

We need not let enthusiasm carry us away, as it seems to have carried Mr. Stuart Chase. We need only observe that a knowledge of the nature of communication in society, of the various uses to which language may be put according to the kind of communication made or intended, will facilitate for our students the use of their own language to their own advantage.

Furthermore, teachers of English can open up if they will an approach to social problems far more fascinating than a study of economics, sociology, or history; they can introduce their pupils to literature.

A great deal of "literature" that is taught in our schools is devastatingly dull stuff that apparently can't be yanked out of the course simply because the books are already bought, or because the teachers know those particular books. Furthermore, a good deal of the teaching of such books adds tedium to dullness and makes the very sight of a book repellent to many young people who have got their piece of paper and left school.

Yet in English and American literature, we have a presentation of men and women and children in society that is perhaps without parallel in the world. We can find people doing almost everything that people can do, facing almost all conceivable problems, and working out solutions to those problems. It is not an abstract presentation: it is people. Some of them are more red-blooded and vigorous than any people we have met in the flesh, and when we watch what they do we often enough find them irresistible just as characters in a story or play.

One trouble with customary presentation of sociological problems is that they are all too often merely problems, abstract theses which are not interesting and certainly not entertaining. These same problems presented in literature may be fascinating because there we see a vivid picture of human society. Consider, for example, how much of man as a social being we may learn from *Moll Flanders,* or *Tom Jones,* or *The Way of All Flesh.* Of our own day we may learn as much from our novelists as from our sociologists: *Babbitt* made more of an impression than the most learned student of society.

Furthermore, we may discover in the pages of literature that a good many of our problems are not new in our day. We can find out that a great deal has been pretty well and intelligently settled before our time, and that people who settled problems in the past were very much like us, however modern and advanced we may consider ourselves. If we understand past societies, we understand much of our own. We shall not need to repeat the past if we are acquainted with it.

Nor should we ever forget that literature is a better guide to life than life itself. As we look about ourselves we are blinded by the glittering little lights of irrelevant accompaniments; we do not see events as we must see them to understand, for we are distracted by accidental matters. The events of life as shown in literature are free of such diversions, and can be observed and evaluated as they are. For this reason, among others, literature has universal significance, which the cluttered

events of life usually do not. More safely and reasonably than from our own lives, we may build theories of living based on the events portrayed and weighed in literature.

Theories are usually dry and repellent in textbooks, but they are not necessarily so in literature. To be sure, they do not stand out marked THEORY; but if we understand implications, we need not always go by labels; we can grow up. It is the privilege of English teachers to help people grow up in society, and to grow up with enthusiasm. They can present to their students a panorama of society which is in itself a great incentive to reasonable action in social matters. How far they are from accomplishing anything of the sort, however, is apparent both in their teaching and in their writing.

IV

Only when we turn to the development of the individual as an individual, however, do we find what our English teachers might best do. They might be the great "Humanists". For convenience, let us define the Humanities as those results of human activity that have not been superseded, those accomplishments of human beings that mankind has not willingly let die. Perhaps the greatest monument of all that has endured is literature. English teachers seem to forget that literature is taught in schools because it has endured: they seem to have got the idea that it has endured because it is taught in schools. One who undergoes typical courses in English can seldom guess why mankind has insisted on keeping what he has put up with in school.

Not all books are interesting to all men; tastes change: what fascinated our grandfathers may bore us. At the same time, without too much trouble we can usually find a good deal of reading matter that will interest a great many people.

If children still have to read *Silas Marner* when they might be reading *Tom Sawyer,* it is rather too bad, because they can learn a lot more about themselves and other human beings from *Tom Sawyer,* and they can have a lot more fun with it.

If our college students, who have to take courses in English, might be turned loose on *Gulliver,* or *I Henry IV,* or Carlyle's *French Revolution,* they might learn a good deal that they don't at present, simply because they would be having a good time. Naturally, it depends to some extent on the instructor whether or not Swift and Shakspere are irresistible, and Carlyle is exciting, just as it depends on him whether or not any one learns how to observe implications and parallels; but it is much easier for a teacher to work with exciting materials than with an orderly but dull procession of more or less worthy authors of all sorts, kinds, and varieties.

Furthermore, to borrow a suggestion from Mark Twain, a good deal of enlightenment may be accomplished by leaving certain authors out.

Works of literature that have survived are the works of some of the choicest spirits that have ever lived—plus a lot of rubbish they have sucked along in their wake. The great ones are pretty well known as a rule, but teachers of English have taken almost sadistic delight in spending time on what has washed along with the great ones. Anthologies of English and American literature devote nearly as much of their space to second-raters as they do to great masters, apparently on the theory that because the fellows lived, we ought to give full attention to their penny whistles.

In other words, our English teachers have set a magnificent example of bad judgment and crazy evaluation. What is more ridiculous than to take time that might be devoted to Chaucer and give it to Lydgate and Hoccleve? People who might be reading Fielding or Smollett have to read Richardson. People who might be reading a half dozen Caroline poets have to read a score of them. And so it goes. When one considers how little time there is to get acquainted with the best, one can only scratch his head at the mental process which completely abandons judgment in the teaching of English literature, and which believes that a little of everything is better than a few judiciously evaluated items.

Instead of encouraging judgment and stimulating the ability to evaluate, our English teachers with pedantic deliberation attempt to crush evaluation and judgment. Perhaps even worse, they spoil things. They make literature a task, they cut it up and ask questions about it. They get boys and girls who might like to read a good book and keep them away from the book by discussing dates, influences, and literary parallels. They sit up in front of their classes and tell their students what is good and what is not good. Pronouncements *ex cathedra* in matters of grammar are bad enough, but such pronouncements in literary matters are even worse. Perhaps as bad are the beseeching attempts of some instructors to make the classes believe that dull writings are fascinating because the instructors for some reason think so.

Whatever may be said for instruction in literature nowadays, it doesn't encourage judgment and the ability to evaluate. It clutters students' minds with things both worth while and not worth while, and takes up a great deal of time that might be better spent. That is what we do with the greatest monument to human achievement that we can ever know.

V.

Twenty-five years ago Christopher Morley was asked to give a college course in Chaucer. Although he was by no means an authority on Middle English, and knew comparatively little about vowel length in Chaucer, and was not familiar with most of the academic talk about Chaucer that has come down the centuries, Mr. Morley accepted the invitation, and as a mere author and journalist, wandered into the academic fold. Almost the only thing he knew about Chaucer was that Chaucer was a great poet.

Those of us who sat in Mr. Morley's Chaucer class found out what for future teachers of English were revolutionary facts. We found out to start with that the English language is a brilliant and delightful medium of communication in the mouth of a man who knows how to use it. Christopher Mor-

ley's vocabulary is immense, but it is neither pedantic nor dull. Furthermore his natural good humor bubbles through his talk and makes him well worth listening to even when he isn't saying very much. In the Chaucer class, he said quite a bit; not only that: he also got us to writing better and thinking better about poetry than we were accustomed to do. He was a benign contagion.

The English language assumed new possibilities, but what happened with Chaucer was a revelation. In the first place, we got acquainted with a whole human society, not in a rather tedious scholarly fashion but in the fashion of people who go out and bat around among their fellow men, find out what is going on, and learn to see what is beneath the surface activity. We found out a lot about how people live together, and knew, as undergraduates, a good deal that some people never find out no matter how many courses in sociology they take.

There are a good many courses nowadays in family life—how to get along with your wife or husband. Never having taken any of these courses, I don't know whether they are as deadly as they sound, but I do know that one group of boys who read Chaucer came away from him with a pretty good idea of how serious quarrels may arise in families, and how they may be averted. Some one who has thoroughly digested *The Franklin's Tale* will not need a great many courses in family life.

We found out how an upright honorable peace-loving gentleman may use his influence to quiet the disturbance created by less admirable characters. We also learned, I am afraid, that such virtuous individuals are apt to be a bit stuffy. They are very good to have around to keep things in order, but they are not much fun to associate with for any length of time. They are rather to be admired than adored.

We found out what people are like and what their actions

are worth, not by any solemn means of ethical precepts but simply by watching things work. We found out, for instance, that the most repugnant hypocrite may speak gospel truth — and at the same time, we found out what money is worth taken by itself, without reference to the rest of human life. We got some stirring insight into human love and affection when we read *The Prioress's Tale,* and at the same time we got a thundering good lesson in anti-Semitism.

And we got laughs. We found out that some of the most hilarious stories imaginable are right smack in the classics. The *Nun's Priest's Tale* had us in good humor and has kept us in good humor off and on for years.

When we turned to *Troilus and Criseyde,* we learned a good deal that should have been more useful subsequently than it turned out to be. We learned how big a fool a man can be and how moving he can be at the same time. We learned of people who suffer at the hands of bores with good intentions. We learned how people can live together and how they cannot; we saw constantly before us a drama of values. Perhaps most valuable of all, we saw and felt the attitude of Chaucer himself, when he considered the character of Criseyde:

> For she so sory was for her untrouthe
> Y-wis, I wolde excuse her yit for routhe.

In short, we learned a great deal about men and women as men and women and as members of society. We learned a great deal about what is worth while and what is not worth while. We learned how to look with sympathy rather than contempt on the antics of our fellowmen, and we found out a great deal about the value of good humor. We found beauty. We found out that Chaucer is such good reading that some of us have been turning to him ever since.

The next year the course in Chaucer was put into the

hands of a scholar, a man of distinction in his field and of deep learning in his subject. Along about the middle of the semester, I met a friend coming from Chaucer class and asked him how Chaucer was going.

"Well," he said, "I know enough rules now so that I can scan all of Chaucer except the eleven lines that I couldn't scan without the rules."

De te fabula.

SENIORS PLAN A BASIC LIBRARY FOR HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATES

By

ISADORA W. MILES

They would graduate within three months. It was difficult to keep their minds on the regular English program. Many of the boys had deferments that would last only through commencement day. Nearly all the others would be eighteen soon after. Several of the girls were engaged. Marriage was in the air, the inevitable combination of war and romance. Here were the adults of a too-close tomorrow. Only the future was real. We talked of the homes that young people would establish after the war. In a technical school the pupils are especially aware of the vast changes on the way in materials and designs for new houses, so they discussed plastics and glass refrigeration. But (the teacher was thinking) what could XII B English contribute to that home of tomorrow? Improvements in designs, materials, comforts, and conveniences are fine, but do they make for better ideals and standards that turn the house into a home?

The question was placed before the class. What can English XII B contribute to the home that you will build as young adults? Undeniably, they responded, there would be better speech as a result of their English work, and, yes, there should be better books. Should be? There *would* be. From the vague "better books" we turned to *what* books and so set upon our last work of the year. We would determine the books that would comprise the basic library of a young couple — high-school graduates both — who were just establishing their new home. Our principal, who became an enthusiastic ally, sug-

gested that we call our library "A Five-Foot Shelf for the High-School Graduate."

As to cost, we did not set out with a definite sum earmarked "library fund." We decided to make a complete list of all the books we felt necessary. Then we would assume that the young couple would purchase them at once, or gradually, as a part of their household budget, depending on their finances and other factors. These books were not to be considered a complete lifetime library. They were to be just the first books that every high-school graduate's home should have. By way of getting library-minded, we discussed first the joy and value of possessing books. Free texts and public libraries represent the greatest boon to the dissemination of knowledge since the magic of Gutenberg, but they do not compensate for private ownership. So, from a realization of the desirability of maintaining a personal library, we went on to show the difference between a planned library and one chosen at random. We read several chapters in Drury and Simmette's *What Books Shall I Read?* and felt that we were now ready to plan the basic library for the high-school graduate. Immediately several enthusiastic pupils began to nominate favorite books as "musts" on the list. They were quieted by pupils who saw that such procedure violated the policy of orderly and deliberate selection.

Fiction was ruled out, as it was thought that taste in fiction varied too much, but some felt that later we might compile a list according to authors and types of stories. It was interesting, however, to note that all the novels so impulsively suggested were those which had been made into movies within the last two or three years: *Now Voyager, Wuthering Heights, This Above All,* and *Lost Horizon.* The movie of the day could not be wrong. The date of the original publication was of no concern. Apparently recency was the chief factor in all their selections, for in all subsequent discussion they would not hear of anything before World War I. A few classics,

maybe. The wisdom of the ages was nothing compared to the latest Hollywood release!

Since the mere naming of books was not in keeping with our idea of careful planning, it was necessary to use another method. So we decided to work from categories after first determining what these categories should consist of.

As the Bible had already been mentioned by two pupils, the teacher considered it a good starting-point and suggested that the term "religious" be used to designate the first category. The class thought that the word "Bible" would be sufficient, as the average family would not want any other religious books. There was general agreement to this idea. It was obvious that they were thinking of theological works, so *The Man Nobody Knows* by Bruce Barton was brought in as an example of the kind of book they might wish to have in their collection. Perhaps philosophy might have been a satisfactory alternative, but "religious" has a special connotation which it would be well for adolescents and adults to bear in mind.

The class accepted the teacher's recommendation without any further discussion and went on to determine the next category. There was no definite or formal outline. The list was to grow out of their own experiences and of four years of English training. The teacher receded further into the background. Each day a pupil acted as chairman and one of the Four Freedoms—the freedom of speech—was in full sway.

"We need a first-aid book." (Red Cross classes!) Everyone admitted that the first-aid book was necessary. "Yes, but that isn't enough. We need a general book on health." "We should have a medical book for everybody." "My mother has a great big one—tells you how to doctor everything from measles to pneumonia." "We don't want that old-fashioned kind." They agreed to include some modern medical books appropriate to the layman.

Some girls wanted a book on interior decorating. Others believed that you could get enough help from magazines. The

boys sided with these; so there would be no basic book on interior decoration. After some argument the boys won a place for a home-repair book. "You couldn't get that out of magazines. You would have to know what to do in a jiffy, and you would need something with an index."

Both boys and girls wanted something on family relations. "People should study more about how to get along together. There wouldn't be so many divorces." "You wouldn't need a book if girls would stay home instead of running out every night as they do nowadays." There was a good chairman that day. Rapping for order, he reminded them that they were getting off the point. "Do you want a book on family relations, or not? From the way you are acting, you will need something." That settled it. A book on family relations would go on the list.

Everyone agreed that a good cookbook was most essential. The boys made jokes about the girl of today not learning how to cook at home. She had to have a book. Classes in nutrition which had recently been opened to both boys and girls made everyone conscious of the need of a book on nutrition as well as a general all-around cookbook. The principal, who kept in touch with us, was most enthusiastic about the nutrition and health categories and was especially pleased with the interest of the boys. He was present the day of the individual reports on these classifications. One of the leading boys in the class had made a thorough study of the whole subject, and his recommendations were readily adopted.

The next day the girls had thought of a good one: "We must have a book on etiquette." "Oh, yeah," groaned the boys, "Mrs. Post!" This was sarcasm, but one brave young lady, not realizing that Mrs. Post was the authority on etiquette, ventured that she had been reading about another book that was just as good. Someone else was on the defensive: "There is no book on etiquette that compares with Mrs. Post's. Mrs. Post's is the very best." "Yes, the best for rich people. We would never need know about those teas and receptions she

tells you about," were quick rejoinders. A check revealed that no one really knew Mrs. Post's book. A few had looked into it. One girl had read something about introductions; another had used it to learn how to be a proper weekend guest. But most of them admitted that they knew the great book only by reputation.

This interlude allowed the teacher a comment. A plan was established for completing the categories and reporting on them separately so that a tentative book could be selected in each field. The reports—to be made by individual pupils or committees — would include all available information: author, title, publisher, date of publication or revision, price, number of pages, and general description of the contents. Although catalogues and publishers' lists were to be consulted, the pupils were advised to see the books for themselves and to bring copies to school if possible. The book selected by the class on the basis of the reports would serve as the representative book within a given category. Later, when the special reports were made on books of etiquette, Mrs. Post's won.

The discussions on what would constitute the categories were resumed with the same youthful fervor. The next conflict was over the dictionary. Some wanted an unabridged. They were overruled by those who felt that a good standard desk or a collegiate edition would meet the needs of our young couple. This skirmish compared with the life-and-death struggle over the issue of a set of encyclopedias versus a general single reference. "What is home without a set of encyclopedias?" "We have always had some kind of source books in our house." "We want something practical, not something that just looks pretty." "We want to read up on the countries where our boys are fighting." "That reminds me," said the chairman, "we shall need an atlas." There was a truce as both sides agreed to add an atlas to the list. The reference problem was still with them when the bell rang. Overnight I talked with the librarian. She and I were agreed that the single reference book was a good basic book.

The deadlock was not broken up the next day. Each side was loaded with reinforcements: "My mother says. . . . ." "My uncle is a lawyer and he knows. . . . ." "Aw, these people are not going to be lawyers." "A general reference book gives enough facts for the average person." The chairman suggested that they wait for the report on the single reference book before deciding. One bright girl had also talked with the librarian and was ready to report on the general reference book found in the school library. She did not give her complete report at that time, but its price of fifteen dollars as against a minimum of fifty dollars to one hundred and fifty dollars for an encyclopedia silenced the "whole-set" people. However, they could not resist adding that they knew that the couple would eventually want a *Britannica.*

Pupils taking a recently inaugurated class in Latin-American history were calling for a book on Latin America. Those who had taken Spanish were sympathetic. Others held that the world was growing smaller and that we could argue for a book on every country and every language. The "good-neighborites" were indignant: "It wasn't the same thing." "The South Americans were next door to us." "We should know more about them." Some who were taking sociology declared that there were types of Americans right here in the United States of America that we could learn more about. A special book about South America was not included. Later at the time of the special reports upon the advice of the librarian, a boy brought in a copy of the *Statesman's Year Book.* He maintained that this book would be an excellent supplement to the atlas we had included. The same pupil also had brought a current issue of the *World Almanac* as a necessary volume on Americana.

The discussion on Latin-American history revealed that there was no United States history on the list. This dreadful oversight was remedied by common consent. They would find the best history ever written. The next suggestion to have a book on gardening received no support. Victory gardens

would be out after the war. The average person could get enough advice from newspapers and magazines, to say nothing of last year's experience. A book on science, however, was thought advisable. The usual high-school text was voted down in favor of a more readable type of work like something from the pen of De Kruif or Slosson. At this point a check on the categories disclosed that there was nothing on art, music, or literature.

Literature was discussed first. They decided against any kind of literary history, as the brightest girl in the class, who had by this time made a thorough investigation of the general-reference book in the library, reported that it contained a fine section on literature. The question of literature was not dropped entirely. Someone suggested that there be some Shakespeare in the house. "But will it be read?" "Having it would stimulate the reading of it." "Anyway no cultured home should be without copies of Shakespeare." The plays would be put into the movies after the war. People would want to read them then. The movie argument swayed the doubters, and the great master made his entrance to our shelves. After Shakespeare had made a place for himself, it was not difficult to gain acceptance of an anthology of British and American poetry. A collection of short stories was rejected as fiction. Later, however, on discovering that there were nineteen categories, they agreed to add a short-story collection to bring the total list to the round number of twenty.

The final fight was over a book on music and art, respectively. The conflict revolved around the question as to whether music and art were special interests or a part of our general culture. The "general culturists" were a high-pressure group. They waxed eloquent on the responsibility of the high-school graduate to contribute to the cultural tone of his community. "Opera was heard over the radio." "Television would be making it more realistic." The arguments for a book on art were not so vehement or as convincing, but the two had

been presented jointly and were voted in on the general-culture ticket.

The list of categories was now considered complete. The job now was to get the reports on the various books within each classification so that a tentative outline might be selected and the whole basic library as we conceived it be presented in review. The principal asked the librarian to arrange for a general exhibit in the school library of as many of the books as she and the class could secure.

A mere perusal of the final list appended could never tell the story of the fun of picking and choosing — the lively squabbles and the really serious efforts of the more earnest pupils to get the most reliable and accurate books in each field. The class took pride in discussing the experiment with their friends on the outside and became quite "book conscious" as to whether the books they met during that time might or might not merit a place on our shelves. Upon the invitation of the librarian, class was held in the library so that books in the category discussed could be examined and placed on a special table for further reference before the final choice was made. After the list was completed, the class did not meet again, as commencement week was at hand. We had not done all that we wanted to do—what magazines for this new home, what children's books, what ways of adding to the library once it was begun? Yet we did accomplish our biggest aim of making library-building a part of the graduate's thinking in planning his own home. Our list would be a valuable starting-point.

As their English teacher, I would not have them sign a pledge. Life would do many things to these "overnight adults" before the basic library would come into being. But I like to imagine them placing first on their shelves that basic book — the Bible — and referring to it freely. More than ever they will need it as a guide to life. Then indeed will XII B English have contributed something to those homes of tomorrow.

SENIORS PLAN A BASIC LIBRARY

THE CLASS LIST FOR A BASIC LIBRARY FOR THE HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATE

1.	Religious	The Bible (with concordance)	$ 5.00
2.	First aid	*First Aid* (American Red Cross)	1.00
3.	Home medical care	*Family Medical Adviser* (Morris Fishbein)	3.50
4.	Home repairs	*First Aid for the Ailing Home* (R. B. Whitman)	2.00
5.	Family relations	*Family Behavior* (Bess Cunningham)	2.75
6.	Etiquette	*Etiquette* (Emily Post)	4.00
7.	Dictionary	*College Standard Dictionary* (Funk and Wagnalls)	3.50
8.	Atlas	*World Reference Atlas* (Rand McNally Co.)	4.50
9.	Encyclopedia	"Lincoln Library" (general reference)	15.00
10.	Yearbook	*Statesman's Year Book*	5.50
11.	Almanac	*World Almanac*	1.00
12.	United States history	*United States History* (H. W. Elson)	2.80
13.	Science	*Two Thousand Years of Science* (R. J. Harvey-Gibson)	3.50
14.	Health and nutrition	*Food, Nutrition, and Health* (McCullom and Becker)	2.50
15.	Cookbook	*Fannie Farmer's Cook Book*	2.50
16.	Poetry collection	*Modern British and American Verse* (Louis Untermeyer)	1.95
17.	Shakespeare	*Complete Works* (Houghton Mifflin Co.)	4.75
18.	Music	*Victor Book of the Opera*	2.00
19.	Art	*Art through the Ages* (Helen Gardner)	4.00
20.	Stories	*Great Short Stories of the World* (Barrett Clark and Maxim Leiber)	2.40
			$74.15

USING GRAMMAR FOR CORRECTNESS AND STYLE

By

W. WILBUR HATFIELD

Very young children frequently use such expressions as "I *goed* to the store with Jane," "Harry *gived* me a piece of candy," "We *singed* 'Happy Birthday' for Daddy." By this very error the toddlers show that they have a concept of the past tense and a knowledge of its usual sign (*ed*). Before school age, children in the best homes sometimes catch and correct their use of singular for plural verb forms. The children of privileged families enter school using correct number and tense forms of verbs, proper case forms of pronouns, and adverbs rather than adjectives to modify verbs.

"Just imitation!" we have been accustomed to say. True, but imitation which would be impossible without concepts of the constructions to be imitated. The children are not repeating, parrot-like, whole sentences which they have heard, but making countless sentences of new words put together in the traditional constructions and inflected according to the traditional patterns. The syntax and inflections of English may be so familiar to a six-year-old that his speech is practically errorless and quite as varied in sentence structure as his ideas require. That is to say, six-year-olds *may* have the command of grammar which it is the object of so much of our instruction to give.

How have the fortunate children acquired painlessly and unconsciously this equipment of working grammatical concepts which we strive so earnestly and so vainly to teach in school? By hearing thousands of examples of each construction with the meaning in the focus of their attention and the

form usually receiving only incidental notice; and also by trying to imitate these constructions in order to convey their own meanings to others. How thorough or permanent such learning is we teachers should realize through the difficulty of correcting any mistakes in it. Fortunately most children, even those somewhat underprivileged, have most of their concepts right, with mistaken notions of such matters as the case of pronouns after *and* and the inflections of a few irregular verbs, possibly without a clear conception of the adverb-adjective distinction. They could not even use our normal word order if they did not have implicit knowledge of the constructions we call *subject, predicate, object, modifier* — even *phrase* and *clause.* A grammarless person could neither read with understanding nor speak intelligibly. Even his thinking would be rudimentary.

What remains, then, as the objective of school training in grammar? Surely, to correct erroneous grammatical concepts arising from the faulty speech of many children's parents and friends, and to extend or develop concepts of some constructions rarely or never used by the aforesaid parents and friends. We must keep firmly in mind that it is these *grammatical ideas* and their habitual employment at which we are aiming.

Now, it would seem reasonable to employ in school the method which proves so effective outside. But the outside learning goes on whether we will or not, and frequently continues to reinforce the misconcepts we wish to correct. Of course we throw into the balance all the hearing and reading of correct constructions such as "That is something for you and *me* to do" which the activities of the school can use; but if the youngster hears elsewhere ten hours a day "That is something for you and *I* to do," his concept of the construction is reasonably sure to be wrong. To weight the scales in favor of our pattern we must contrive to focus attention upon it and to make it seem more desirable.

Let us begin our teaching of a point in grammar by discovering first to ourselves and then to our pupils an expres-

sional problem which they have and which the proper use of this construction will solve. This problem may be one of correctness, such as using *is* or *are, do* or *does* in relative clauses; or one of effectiveness, such as using a variety of word orders and placing at the beginning of a sentence an echo of the preceding sentence or some other transitional expression. These expressional problems of the children all recur so frequently that the teacher may easily attack them in a logical order. Almost any day in the usual class the teacher may find need for almost any construction, so that the teaching of grammar may be both systematic and incidental at the same time.

The manner in which the students' attention is called to the expressional problem may be as varied as the forms of marriage proposals, depending upon circumstances and personalities. Let us assume the simplest and baldest procedure, merely saying that a sentence such as "This is something for you and *I* to work out," seems to have a mistake in it. If the class can readily agree[1] that *me* should replace *I* in this sentence, we pass at once to imitation of the construction. Unless the students already have a clear concept of the "object of a preposition" some of the imitation will be wrong, and comparison of "John and *I* will do it" with "This is for you and *I*" will bring out this concept of object of a preposition. If the class cannot readily agree upon *I* or *me,* a search for similar constructions which are known to be correct is in order. Composition texts, readers, and any well written books (excluding the speeches of illiterate characters in fiction), as well as sentences used by or approved by educated adults of the pupils' acquaintance, are proper sources. Sorting and comparison of these bring out the notion of "object of a preposition"—and shortly the teacher uses the terms *preposition* and *object* without confusion to the children.

Let us assume a more subtle procedure with a problem of effectiveness. The students write too many simple sentences with the invariable order of subject, predicate, object, adverbial modifiers. The teacher presents two short paragraphs of iden-

tical content but one in choppy simple sentences and the other in complex sentences which show relations and subordination of ideas. Any upper elementary or high school class easily chooses the better, complex-sentence version. Then they take a new choppy paragraph and improve it. If unable to do this they take pairs of sentences and combine them, and then frame other sentences in imitation of these. When they have become quite conscious of these combining words the teacher begins to call these words conjunctions and possibly calls the formerly separate statements when combined in a sentence clauses. The students, needing to refer to these constructions in discussing their students, begin to apply *conjunction* and *clause* just as they have learned to apply appropriately *mother, chair, school, play,* and *lie* (falsehood). Their concepts of *conjunction* and *clause* will not be as complete or as definite as the teacher's, but the concepts will be genuine and thoroughly at home in the students' minds—a part of their working equipment. With use such concepts will become both broader and more definite, just as do *mother, lie,* etc.

Note that the terminology of grammar is applied—AFTER concepts to which to apply it have been created or brought to conscious attention. It will be a real convenience on future occasions to be able to recall these constructions by speaking of *preposition* and *object* instead of saying "a short word like *for, from to*" and "the main word after one of those short words."

The terminology of grammar is useful when it is added to concepts the pupils already have and which they have become conscious of. It is baffling and discouraging if given before the concept is acquired and recognized.

And concepts — especially difficult, abstract ones such as the relationships that constitute the science of grammar — are acquired more readily and clearly through a number of attentively considered examples than through definition. William Heard Kilpatrick, whose conceptual power and sense of language are distinguished, tells us that his teacher's definition of preposition meant absolutely nothing to him, and that when

she gave some examples the only common characteristic he could discern was brevity. Accordingly when called to give further examples he offered all the short words he could think of, including *the* and *and*—which for some reason mysterious to him the teacher would not accept. Only years later did he find out what prepositions really are. Most youngsters do even worse than little Willie Kilpatrick, and, instead of studying the examples to find their common characteristic, memorize the definition with its abstract words which are inevitably semantic blanks. In Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma,* Dubedat, the villain, when called a "scoundrel," asks, "What is a scoundrel?" and receives the only possible reply, "You're a scoundrel"—an example, not a definition. Only one who had the concepts of honor, of property rights, of truthfulness which he seems never to have sensed, could understand a *definition* or explanation of the epithet. The teacher who tries to tell a pupil what a sentence is by saying that it is "a group of words which makes an *assertion,* asks a question, or gives a command," would much better depend upon illustrations and conscious, supervised imitation. To define "subject" as "the word about which the *predicate* makes an *assertion*" is certainly not to illuminate a mind which has failed to perceive that *John and I went* rather than *Me and John went* is the usual form in books and among educated people. The grammatical concepts, as accurate concepts as possible, are necessary. The terminology is useful, if attached to concepts already formed. Definitions, confusing and harmful if given too soon, are useful only if worked out by the pupil himself—and then most of the value lies in the thinking done in working them out.

Let us return to the classroom process. The first step was to bring up the expressional problem. The second step was to discover the construction which solves that problem of correctness or of effectiveness. In most cases this discovery of the construction involves imitation which initiates ability to use the construction. If there has not been sufficient repetition to give easy command of the construction, further repetition—

call it practice or drill, if you wish—should follow. Anyone who has watched children knows that they do not mind practicing when they foresee and approve the performance to come. Please note that this practice does not attempt to set up a *habit* of speech or writing; it can develop nothing more than the ability to use this particular locution, and possibly the realization of its desirability.

Finally the now familiar construction is used to solve the expressional problem raised at first, and the class goes on. Being only human, the youngsters may have to return to the same topic again later; some of them may even have to go through the developmental process again. When we choose only functional grammatical ideas to present we have time for necessary reviews.

In the procedure I am presenting we never have to look for opportunities for the students to use the grammar they have learned. Nor do the students find difficult in deliberate speech or writing the application of the grammar they have learned, for they learn the grammatical ideas, not someone else's abstract description of these ideas or concepts, and learn them in and through such use as they later need to make. There is a further advantage of the procedure which I can but mention here. When we compel ourselves to find the expressional problem any grammatical construction or concept will solve before we present that construction or concept, all the items useless to our particular pupils are automatically excluded — deferred to the elective course in the junior or senior year — and the useful items are with equal inevitability included. No other scheme for separating functional from theoretical grammar is so easy and so satisfactory.

This is not the place for a detailed listing of the expressional problems and the corresponding items of grammar. We all know that students' errors are largely in the number of present-tense verbs; in confusion of the preterit with the past participle of irregular verbs, especially of *come, do, go, run,* and *see;* in wrong case forms of pronouns, especially after *and;*

in the use of adverbial forms to modify verbs and adverbs; and in writing incomplete and run-on sentences. We all know that our students could speak and write better if they were able to subordinate the statements of subordinate ideas, to put parallel ideas in parallel form, to put the main meaning of the predicate in the verb rather than in the auxiliary noun, to use relative *whose* (not found in Fries in his samples of illiterate writing) and *whom,* to bring transition words to the beginning of sentences, and so on. For a complete list examine in any good course of study the errors to be corrected and the graces of expression to be learned.

Let me summarize. (1) Find the expressional problem. (2) Make the students feel it to be their problem. (3) Lead the students to the solution. (4) Give further practice, if needed. (5) Have the students apply the solution to their problem. (6) Be on the alert for recurrence of this problem.

[1] This agreement is easily produced by "supposing" that *you and* was omitted. Perhaps a sentence with a single pronoun object of a preposition should be written on the blackboard and left there.

YOU CAN'T WRITE WRITING

By

WENDELL JOHNSON

I

The late Clarence Darrow, while speaking one day to a group of professors of English and others of kindred inclination, either raised or dismissed the basic problem with which his listeners were concerned by asking, 'Even if you do learn to speak correct English, who are you going to talk it to?'

What Mr. Darrow was contending can be summarized in the statement that the effective use of the English language is more important than the 'correct' use of it, and that if you can speak English 'correctly', but not effectively, it does not matter very much 'who you talk it to'. I agreed that day, ten years ago, with Mr. Darrow's contention, and I still do, but whereas ten years ago his remarks served to dismiss for me the problem of the teaching of English, they serve now, in a new context of experience, to raise that problem to a position of peculiar educational and social significance. For, like many others, I have come to take a serious view of the apparently astonishing discrepancy between the opportunity and responsibility of the teachers of English and the actual contributions which they appear to make to the efficiency and well-being of individuals and of society.

The point of view which I have to present with regard to this problem has gradually developed during the decade that I have spent, sitting near the end of the educational conveyor belt, helping to put certain finishing touches on the human products of the scholastic mill. This is a way of saying that my experience has been chiefly with graduate students. When they arrive in the graduate college they have had, as a mini-

mum, sixteen years of formal education. During practically every one of those sixteen (or more) years they have undergone some kind of training specifically designed to enhance their skill in the use of the English language. In spite of this, there falls upon me, as upon other directors of Masters' and Doctors' dissertations, the task of teaching graduate students how to write clear and meaningful and adequately organized English.

What are the linguistic shortcomings that the teachers of English seem unable to correct? Or do they in some measure nurture them? First of all, it is to be made clear that grammatical errors are not particularly serious. Whether or not they find anyone to 'talk it to', the majority of graduate students have been taught most of the rudiments of 'correct' English. In fact, it appears that the teachers of English teach English so poorly largely because they teach grammar so well. They seem to confuse or identify the teaching of grammar with the teaching of writing. In any event, what they have failed to teach my graduate students about writing is not grammar. It is skill in achieving factually meaningful statements, and skill in organizing statements into an order consistent with the purposes for which the statements are made. The students have not been taught how adequately to achieve either precision or systematic arrangement in the written representation of facts. This can be stated in another and more significant way by saying that they have not been taught how to use language for the purpose of making highly reliable maps of the terrain of experience.

These students exemplify the simple fact that although one may have learned how to write with mechanical correctness, one may still have to learn how to write with significance and validity. One of my friends, who is a particularly astute investigator of the psychology of reading, has stated essentially the same problem by saying that the one place in which a child is not likely to learn to read is the reading class, for the simple reason that one cannot read reading. One can only

read history or geometry or biology, etc. If the child reads such material in the reading class, then it is difficult to see how the reading class differs appreciably from the classes in history, geometry, and other subjects. If the child does not read such material in the reading class, then the reading class must differ from these others, but in a puzzling and perhaps disturbing way, for it may be that the reading teacher is actually making the amazing effort to get the child to read reading.

In the teaching of writing, or any other of the language skills, the same problem appears. One cannot write writing, any more than one can read reading. One can only write, just as one can only read, history, or geography, or physiology, or some other such subject about which writing can be done. One can, of course, write about writing, but what one writes about writing will have little, if any, significance except insofar as one writes about writing about something else. We have to deal here with a very general, and a very crucial problem. What is true of reading and writing is true, also, of speaking, or drawing, or painting. It is true of mathematizing. It holds for any kind of symbolizing. Just as one cannot, with significance, read reading, or write writing, or speak speaking, except insofar as one reads about something, or writes about something, or speaks about something, so one cannot, with significance, symbolize symbolizing in general except insofar as one symbolizes the symbolizing of something.

II

It seems clear to me, as I attempt to analyze the writing difficulties of graduate students, and as I ponder over my own experiences as a student of English, that these considerations, sketched immediately above, are crucial. The teacher of English appears to attempt to place the emphasis upon writing, rather than upon writing-about-something-for-someone. From this it follows quite inevitably that the student of English fails in large measure to learn the nature or the significance of clarity or precision and of organization in the written representation of facts.

He learns grammatical correctness reasonably well, because that is emphasized. But so long as the student's primary anxieties are made to revolve around the task of learning to spell, punctuate, and observe the rules of syntax, he is not likely to become keenly conscious of the fact that when he writes he is, above all, communicating. If he is to learn to communicate effectively, he must realize that his first obligation to his reader is not to be grammatically fashionable, but to be clear and coherent. One does not just communicate, one communicates something to someone. And the something communicated is not the words used in the communication, but whatever those words represent. Moreover, the degree to which there is communication depends precisely upon the degree to which the words represent the same thing for the receiver or reader that they do for the sender or writer. And the degree to which they do is an index of the clarity of the communication or written statement. Thus, clarity can be *measured,* not just 'felt' or 'appreciated', but measured, in terms of the ascertainable agreement between writer and reader, and among various readers, as to precisely what the words of the writer represent.

My graduate students have not been taught this. They write as if they had been trained to observe a principle of *caveat lector.* Such a principle, strange as it may seem, is championed, in one form or another, by certain teachers of English. Mr. Cleanth Brooks, Jr., writing on the subject of communication in poetry in the journal, *American Prefaces,* in 1940, expresses this curious point of view in these words:

> The theory of communication throws the burden of proof on the poet, overwhelmingly and at once—the reader tells the poet: here I am; it's your job to get it across to me—when he ought to be assuming the burden of proof himself. Now the modern poet has thrown the weight of responsibility on the reader.

I have quoted Mr. Brooks because he has succeeded in stating with unusual conciseness this strange notion that the writer is properly under no obligation to be communicative.

I do not wish, on the other hand, to be understood as saying that a reader has no obligation to try to meet a genuinely original (and therefore difficult) writer half-way, for obviously many writers and poets, dissatisfied with the clichés of their time and trying to create new ways of feeling (i.e., to recanalize the reader's semantic reactions), must necessarily rely upon the reader's willingness to accept a revised vocabulary of an unfamiliar set of symbols. But this is a problem only in extremely advanced levels of artistic composition. In undergraduate instruction, even to imply that a writer has no obligations to his readers is to become, whether one wishes to or not, an advocate of obfuscation.

Such advocates of obfuscation apparently teach fairly well, if it is they who have instructed my graduate students. They have never learned, so far as I can see, to take the reader seriously into consideration. They do not, to be sure, artfully avoid clarity; they artlessly fail to achieve it. The contention that in writing they are communicating, that they are addressing a reader, simply strikes them as a novel point of view. They do not rebel against it; many of them just don't understand it.

This basic notion of communication, however, is not extraordinarily difficult to explain, and as it begins to sink in, and when the students have seen a few demonstrations, not of the reading or criticizing of communications, but of the *process* of communicating by means of writing, they are at least prepared to understand that there are techniques of clarity. Moreover, they are able to understand that these techniques have something to do with effectiveness in writing — unless one means by writing a gyring and gimbling in the wabe of literary slithy toves, or unless one believes the excuse offered by frustrated literary midwives; namely, the 'only-God-can-make-a-tree' theory that effectiveness cannot be taught at all. But this definition of 'writing' and this theory of 'effectiveness' have practically nothing to do with the kind of writing that involves communication. For communication is achieved by virtue of

clarity, as this is defined in terms of agreement between writer and reader, or among various readers, as to what the writer is referring to. The ability to achieve clarity in this sense, and thus communicative effectiveness, is a tree that others besides God can make, at least in a rough fashion.

III

This discussion is not designed to take the place of a textbook for the teaching of effective communicative writings, but it is offered in the hope that a brief statement of a few simple principles upon which such writing is based might serve at least to raise the question as to why these principles are not more adequately taught by English instructors.

The first of these principles has already been given in the statement that clearness depends upon, and can be measured in terms of, the degree of agreement between the writer and his readers as to what the words of the writer represent. Simply by striving for a high degree of such agreement, the writer discovers, in some measure, his ingenuity in achieving it. He discovers the usefulness of conditional and quantifying terms, the confusion created by leaving out significantly differentiating details, the degree to which the meaning of a term varies from context to context, and the kinds of difference he must allow for among his readers' habits of interpreting words. He learns to rely less on the dictionary and more on the linguistic habits of the people for whom he writes. He discovers that literary posing, pleasurable as it may be, usually can be enjoyed only at the expense of effective communication—that Chesterton's paradoxes or Paul de Kruif's chronic astonishment are more titillating than informative. He discovers that there are various levels of abstraction, and that if he goes systematically from lower to higher levels he can use so-called abstract words and still be reasonably clear.

Above all, perhaps, he discovers the basic significance of order, or relations, or structure, or organization. This matter of structural relationships has wide ramifications, and no writer

ever exhausts it, but the student quickly grasps some of its more obvious aspects, if he is striving for agreement between himself and his reader. It does not take him long to understand that the organization of what he writes should correspond to the organization of what he is writing about if the reader is to follow him readily. The graduate students with whom I work frequently have difficulty organizing their descriptions of experimental techniques or procedures, and I have found that it is more helpful to refer them to a cookbook than to a textbook on composition. By examining a cookbook they see at once that the organization of a description of procedure is determined simply by the order of the events that make up the procedure. First you do *a*, and then *b*, and then *c*, and you write it in that order because you do it in that order. This simple principle of order is fundamental in practically all descriptive, narrative, and expository writing, and it is obvious to anyone who is attempting to be considerate of the reader.

One might suppose that graduate students would know this, but in spite of the years they have spent in English courses most of them seem not to have learned much about it. The more significant fact is that, as a rule, they learn quite readily to apply this simple principle, once it is clearly explained and demonstrated to them. In this case, certainly, one can make a tree that either God or the English teachers forgot to make.

One aspect of organization that seems to have eluded practically all graduate students is that involved in the making of transitions. Even those who have been taught how to lay beads in a row have not been taught how to string them. Just as the order of what one writes is determined by the order of the parts or events involved in what one is writing about, so the ways in which transitions are made in the writing are determined by the ways in which the parts or events are related in the realities one is describing, narrating, or explaining. The ability to move from one sentence or paragraph or chapter to the next, in such a way as to blend them into a unified whole, is largely dependent upon an understanding of the reasons for

going from one to the next, of why one statement should follow another instead of the reverse, of why one should say, 'It follows, then', rather than 'But.' And these reasons are found in the character of the relations existing among the details of that about which the writing is being done. This becomes obvious to one who is not trying to write writing, but who is attempting, rather, to write-about-something-for-someone.

Another principle underlying communicative writing is that clarity is a prerequisite to validity. It is to be considered that statements that flow beautifully and are grammatically superb may be, also, utterly devoid of factual meaning, or meaningful but vague, or precise but invalid. For writing to be effective, in the sense in which I am using this term, it may or may not be grammatically correct, but it must be both clear and valid. It can be clear without having validity, but if it is unclear its validity cannot well be determined. It must, then, first of all, be clear; it must be that before the question of its validity can even be raised. We ask of the writer, 'What do you mean?' before we ask, 'How do you know?' Until we reach agreement as to precisely what he is writing about, we cannot possibly reach agreement as to whether, or in what degree, his statements are true.

Only to the extent that the various readers of a statement agree as to the specific conditions or observations required for ascertaining its validity, can the question of its validity have meaning. And the extent to which the readers of the statement agree on these conditions is, of course, indicative of the extent to which the statement is clear. If a statement is such that its readers do not agree at all as to how it might be verified or refuted, the statement may be 'beautiful' or 'rich in meaning' or grammatically irreproachable, but it is also, from the point of view of scientific courses such as I am teaching, nonsense. It cannot be demonstrated to be valid or invalid, and is meaningful, therefore, to its author, possibly to his English teacher, and perhaps to his psychiatrist.

My graduate students have not learned this, either. They

show this in a particularly disturbing manner when they first attempt to state the topics or problems they propose to investigate in undertaking their theses. They quite characteristically propose problems which preclude the possibility of clear discussion. They proposed questions for investigation, for which they desire to obtain precise answers, but which are so stated as to be unanswerable. Apparently they have never been taught that one cannot get a precise answer to a vague question—that the terminology of the question limits the clarity and thus the validity of the answer. Many students are so befuddled on this point that they do not recognize any relation at all between clarity and validity. They actually assume, for example, that they can ask, 'What causes personality maladjustments?' without specifying what they mean by 'causes', or by 'personality', or by 'maladjustments', or what observations one is to make in order to comply with their definition of 'what'. Many of them appear to have been taught that to eliminate the vagueness of a question or statement is to destroy its 'richness of meaning'—that for a statement to be 'full of meaning' it must not mean anything in particular!

Even though they have been so taught, and come, therefore, to the graduate college quite untrained in the writing of valid statements, they can be taught, to a considerable degree, to gauge the validity of what they write. They can be trained to do this by being trained, first, to write clearly—when there is reasonable agreement among its readers as to what it represents in the realm of fact—its validity can be judged, or a procedure for determining its degree of validity can be devised.

In summary, then, what graduate students, as I know them, have not been well taught—and what, in my judgment, their English instructors should have been able to teach them, because the students do learn readily—is the ability to write a clear, organized, unified, and valid document. They have been made familiar with grammar, for the most part, and they have picked up a few tricks of literary flavoring. The grammar can be used to advantage; most of the literary condiments have to be chucked.

IV

There appear to be three main reasons for the English instructors' failure. The first is that they do not appear to utilize to any considerable extent the principle of teaching by example. They tell the student how to write and how not to have written, but they don't, as a rule, do any actual writing for him or with him. They show him examples of what has been written, but no examples of something being written.

To try to learn to write by reading literature that has already been written and thoroughly jelled, instead of by observing the actual writing of literature, is much like trying to learn to bake a cake by eating one, instead of by watching the baker make a cake. And if you hold the writer's pencil you learn faster, just as you do if you hold the baker's mixing spoon. It is the old, old principle of teaching by example, and what the teachers of English forget is that there are no examples of writing in the grammar book or the anthology; there are only generalized blueprints of statements yet unwritten and examples of something already written—cakes that were baked yesterday. The teacher herself has to provide the examples of writing, to demonstrate the process. She must bake the cake of written English, not merely eat the cake that Hawthorne baked, as she stands before the class.

The second, and a more grave, reason for their failure is that they appear to place the emphasis on 'writing', rather than on writing-about-something-for-someone. You cannot write writing. Or, at least if you do, you are not likely to learn to write with clarity and validity, because they are not important to one who merely writes writing. Unless the emphasis is placed upon writing as a form of communication and directed very definitely, therefore, to an actual, live reader, the importance of clarity, organization and validity is not likely to become very apparent. Their importance becomes obvious, and the means of achieving them suggest themselves more or less readily, the moment one begins seriously to write about-something-for-someone.

The third and final point in this 'diagnosis' of English instruction is that teachers of English, with apparently only a few exceptions, cling tenaciously to two strange theories. The first is that writing is an art, and the second is that it cannot be taught. What they seem to mean when they say that writing is an art is that writing does not have to say anything—except to the reader who has 'appreciation'—that writing is at its best when it is a form of expression *qua* expression.

In teaching the student to write, if one takes this view of 'writing as an art', there is no point—in fact, there is a strong argument to the contrary—in training the student to express himself clearly or with validity. For truth that is 'not art' would be of no value, and if art that is clear is regarded as a contradiction in terms (and it seems to be so regarded by some), there would remain only truth that is vague as the ideal of the teachers of English whom we are here discussing. But in communicative writing, truth is never vague, for unless a statement is clear, the degree to which it is true cannot be determined. All of which goes far to explain how students can reach the graduate college without learning how to produce effective communicative writing.

The explanation is extended when we recall the other theory, so popular among some teachers of English, that real effectiveness in writing, since it is an 'art', cannot be taught at all. Only God can make a tree; the teacher of English can only water the tree with verbal dew in the hope of keeping it green, and even the value of doing that is debatable. Teachers frequently boast of having 'discovered' a writer; it seems that this in itself is regarded as no mean accomplishment. It is also to be noted that writers are sometimes said to have been 'influenced' by a teacher. But when a teacher has 'discovered' a writer and 'influenced' him, he cannot further add to what the genes have done, nor detract from what the fates will do. Presumably, then, he doesn't try. And this pedagogical swooning by the teachers of English, on the theory that you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, results in their making

a great many sows' ears out of silk purses. It is not a question of the truth or falsity of their theory that effective writing cannot be taught, although this theory is probably not as largely true as many teachers of English suppose. The significant point is that the theory makes for unimaginative and lackadaisical teaching. Even God's trees might benefit from some systematic pruning and spraying.

V

My own narrow concern with all this lies in the fact that the ineffectiveness of the English instruction in our schools makes for a serious difficulty in the graduate college in all its branches. But the problem has an importance far more vast than this fact could ever give to it. For the ability of the individual, and of groups of individuals, to use language clearly and with validity is basic to personal efficiency and general development — it is basic to sanity itself — and it is fundamental to intelligent social organization and to the adequate management of national and international problems. The teachers of English in our schools and universities have been and are being entrusted with the heavy responsibility of training the members of our society in the effective communicative use of our language. It is not a responsibility that they can meet appropriately merely by teaching the formalism of grammar, or superciliously disclaim by asserting that effective writing is an art and cannot be taught.

Effective writing is a human necessity in anything resembling a democratic culture, and this becomes increasingly true as the culture becomes increasingly complex. If the effective use of language cannot be taught, or if it is not to be taught to a far greater extent than it has been, we may well have occasion to despair of the grand experiment dreamed by Voltaire, championed by Washington and Franklin, and cherished by the American people through many generations. And if we must despair of that, then truly, even if you do learn to speak correct English, it may well not seem to matter very much who

you talk it to'. For when the people cannot adequately speak or write their language, there arise strong men to speak and write it for them—and 'at' them.

The issues of which I write are by no means to be regarded as academic issues. We are a symbolic class of life. To say that we are human is to say, above all and with incalculable significance, that our problems, as individuals, as groups, and as a world culture, are symbolic problems. They are problems that center around the symbols of government, the symbols of finance and general economy, of social status, of power and prestige, of class and race. They are the problems involved in the great institutionalized symbol systems of the Church, the Law, the State. They are problems of meaning, of evaluation, of orientation, processes which, on human levels, are predominantly symbolic in character. It is not the vestige of some forebear's whim that the whole structure of our educational system is founded squarely on the three R's, for reading, writing, and the use of numbers are forms of behavior in the absence of which *human* society would disintegrate and vanish. The degree to which these forms of behavior are cultivated and made adequate determines, more than does anything else, the degree to which a symbolic class of life may escape the threat of self-destruction and achieve cultural maturity. Our maladjustment, no less than our genius, as individuals and as groups, lies in our way of responding to and with symbols.

The place of the teacher of English in the structure of a symbolic society is, thus and indeed, not one to be occupied by petulant little men engrossed in verbal 'fancy work'. It is not too much to say that our possibilities for progress are determined, and limited, by those who instruct us in the use of our language. This view is as disheartening, perhaps, as it is challenging, but the more challenging it is to some, the less disheartening it need be to others.

LET'S TEACH COMPOSITION!

By

EDWARD W. HAMILTON

When deans of graduate schools and full professors who share with them the directing of advanced course work and research find—as they constantly do—that their protégés are able neither to review other people's facts and theories intelligibly nor to formulate and present conclusions, they blame the freshman course in English composition. Their condemnation is paid less attention than it deserves because the course they attack is an orphan. The ill-assorted group of probationers, tenure-secure ladies, and disappointed assistant professors to whose care the foundling has been entrusted have no love for her, and, instead of defending the child or trying new methods in an attempt to make her do what is expected of her, they admit their failure and offer excuses.

I

Their best reply is that, since the average freshman has a notoriously short memory, by the time he reaches graduate school he can reasonably be expected to have forgotten all that they taught him regarding comma faults, dangling modifiers, and the other niceties of composition. But the deans and professors are not speaking of men and women who once were average freshmen. Rather, they have in mind students who, with few exceptions, belonged to the likeliest quarter of the English teacher's composition class. And, further, it is not minutiae that drive senior-college teachers and research directors to despair. Those men are concerned because their students cannot express ideas.

There is the point! Discipline in the presentation of ideas, either the student's own or someone else's, form an insignificant part of Freshman English. It is underemphasized, first, because instructors, together with the academic Olympians who direct their efforts, persist in the unwarranted assumption that youngsters who are truly college material know how to read intelligently, are in the habit of thinking, and can distinguish between thought and emotion, opinion and prejudice; second, because instructors, or many of them, so mistake the meaning of *freedom of speech* that they hesitate to criticize content; and, third, because they think formal correctness more fundamental than clear thinking.

In his preoccupation with perfecting his students' knowledge of grammar, punctuation, and mechanics, the teacher allots outlining no more than two or three hours in the two-semester course and, in any event, neither takes up that technique nor talks about limiting the subject, singling out the principal issue, and assembling evidence, testimony, arguments, examples, or details until the students have written nearly half of their quota of themes. Furthermore, he uses the essays in the course anthology—on the advice of the editors in most cases—merely as sources in which students may find topics for themes, rather than as illustrations of expository method or as materials for teaching intelligent reading, criticism, or summarizing.

The instructor seems insufficiently aware that to require, or even to permit, themes on topics about which students can rely for material solely on their experience is to set highly difficult tasks. Unquestionably, such assignments have a place in the course, but at the beginning of the term, when they are customarily made, youngsters have had no chance to see what capable essayists have written on like subjects. The trivial narratives and bigoted pronouncements that flow more or less readily from their pens furnish their teacher a staple for his lunch-table shop talk, but serve no other purpose. And judged by reasonable standards, those papers are failures. But under

the circumstances—since students cannot be expected to know what has not been taught them—the teacher marks their work *D* or *C*, provided that they have written no fragmentary sentences and have committed no more than three or four blunders of less heinous sorts. On most of the themes he makes no further comment.

The instructor gives his students just as little real help when they start spade work for the single investigative paper required of them. He tells them which of the campus buildings houses the library, introduces them at long distance to the card catalogue and to the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, assures them that librarians really are nice people when one gets to know them, and sends them on their way. He may admonish them to use more than one reference, but he does so in order that they may get a sufficient number of items for their bibliographies and considerable practice in writing footnotes. Again, it should be apparent, he seems more concerned with superficialities of form than with content. If he has a notion that his students will see differences between authors in interpretation and emphasis given the facts or even perceive downright contradictions between conclusions drawn from them, he will be disappointed. Never having been trained to search out assumptions, interpretations, or conclusions in the essays contained in their anthology, they turn in papers that are reminiscent of *Literary Digest* articles—mere chains of quotations joined by platitudinous links that reveal their incomprehension rather than represent their efforts to be unbiased. It is not surprising, furthermore, that almost every paper contains instances of innocent plagiarism.

But the course of study neither requires nor allows time for a second research paper in which students might learn to avoid the most flagrant of the errors they made in the first. His conscience calloused by years of disappointing results, the instructor thanks heaven that he is through until next term. Then, because the youngsters have written four-hundred-word themes bearing such titles as "Autobiography," "Fraternities,"

"If I Had an Income of $300 a Month for Life," and "My First Hunting Trip," topped by an opus of fifteen hundred words (about five hundred of their own) entitled, for example, "The History, Causes, Frequency, and Treatment of Cancer" and, more importantly, because they have passed an objective examination in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics, the English department declares them ready, so far as technique is concerned, to write reviews of Jefferson's educational theories, descriptions of the apparatus and methods used in electrolysis, and discussions of the single-tax theory of Henry George.

II

No one will expect to be told of a simple change guaranteed to make freshman composition do everything that the deans and professors expect of it. In fact, not all of the job can be outlined or even suggested here. But at the outset, it is clear, emphasis must be redistributed. Time must be found for instruction and practice in analytical reading, evaluating, and forming opinions.

First, the amounts of attention paid to formal grammar, to minor punctuation rules, and to diction *in vacuo* can be confiscated. In some schools a full month can be saved by these eliminations. Second, though instruction in the techniques of fiction and of lyric expression— what the progressive schools call "creative writing"—is defensible, it can be wasteful. The few students who can become writers should be counseled to enroll later in an advanced composition class in which students of their interests and ability will compose the entire group.

Since English composition can be no more than a tool for the ungifted, and since as such it is the *sine qua non* of all academic pursuits and of every profession, it is reasonable that no fewer than eight of the twelve or ten of the fifteen themes that students write each term should marshal ideas. In preparation, the class work should train them to grasp the main point and the implications of assigned reading, to distinguish prejudice from opinion, and to perceive and report differences

in interpretations, emphases, and conclusions. It should train them in the formulation of syllogisms, in the perception of unstated major premises, and in the proper discounting of emotionally toned words. And it should equip them to recognize fallacies and to point out demagoguery.

At the beginning, teachers could require two four-hundred-word summaries of essays or articles contained in the course anthology, stipulating that no more than two or three sentences of direct quotation may be used. Summaries are preferable to themes attacking or supporting an author's thesis, at this stage of the training, for beginners learn best if they are required to do just one thing at a time. They certainly should not be permitted, in the first pair of these themes based on readings, to take any tangents that appeal to them, for doing so would almost certainly fail to give them training in close reasoning and in careful expression.

In their second summaries freshmen will reveal that they have learned the technique of acknowledgment and are able to recognize the relative importance of points fairly well. Consequently, for the next three or five assignments, reviews of pairs of essays on an identical subject are in order. At first, the students should be forbidden to express their preferences or their individual views, if they have any, for in voicing their own opinions they will neglect the task of presenting the similarities and differences in the statements of their authorities. Next, the instructor may select a pair of articles of which to have his charges write complete critical analyses. Only after those preliminaries, if at all, should he require that they write fifteen-hundred-word research papers based on several references or give them an opportunity to write short papers on subjects about which they have not been led to scrutinize their notions or to assemble facts.

It is not simple, this answer to the problem of making English composition do what is expected of it. The teacher will encounter difficulties of several sorts. In the first place, since most students dislike reading and have expected to do

none until "finals" week, they will offer an astounding variety of excuses to avoid doing some earlier. Second, they are used to being fed capsules guaranteed to contain no foreign matter or impurities and are consequently disinclined to question what they read. Third, since as yet there is no textbook for freshmen that contains an introduction to logic or to less formal analysis and since there is no book of readings in which pairs of articles on the same topic appear in sufficient numbers, the instructor will have to spend extra time planning lessons and finding materials.

Those three do not exhaust the obstacles. But though they, and others as well, are real, they can be surmounted, provided that laziness in freshmen, and perhaps in the teachers, can be subdued or eradicated. Professor Elizabeth Jackson of the University of Minnesota once called attention to the error President Hutchins made when, in commenting on instructorial slovenliness, he omitted "hungry" from Milton's line: "The hungry Sheep look up, and are not fed." She was right in maintaining that the verse, correctly quoted, cannot be said to describe the bulk of twentieth-century college freshmen, but wrong in thinking that teachers are therefore exonerated. Academic shepherds are among those whose

> . . . . lean and flashy songs
> Grate on their scrannel Pipes of wretched straw.

III

In following the plan of instruction that has been outlined, teachers can use essays from standard English literature. There are, to cite a few illustrations, the Arnold-Huxley disagreement on the objectives and content of education, Carlyle's and Macaulay's conflicting views of Boswellian biography, and the divergent attitudes toward old age and death represented by Lamb's "New Year's Eve," Stevenson's "Aes Triplex," and Hazlitt's "On Fear of Death." The reader is not to infer from references to less literary materials earlier in this discussion that the criticism of elementary composition as it is now taught

and the counterproposals here advanced are founded on the premise that the more or less distinctive jargons of engineers, physicists, physiologists, social workers, and the rest deserve to be treated as languages. On the hand, it should be apparent that this article does not maintain the theory that English is English regardless of the use to which it is put. These models of the essay are acceptable material for the course principally because analyzing them will give students practice in dealing with ideas.

And using works by Carlyle, Macaulay, and their equals would be pleasant. But one should forego using them, for their style is quite unlike that which students must learn to write if they are to do satisfactory senior-college work. The beginner is slow in seeing the applicability of the skills he is taught, and although he may have passed the point of asking whether the Chicago mentioned in his arithmetic problem is the city described in his geography book, he is quite capable of thinking that complete and grammatical sentences are required only in the papers he writes for "English" and of neglecting the techniques of scholarly exposition in writing papers for his technical courses unless selections drawn from politics, economics, history, and science have been used in his training.

Since materials of these sorts can be found most readily in current magazines, it is to them that the instructor who is interested in this plan must be advised to go. It can be objected, of course, that in taking models only from those sources, one subjects oneself to President Hutchins' strictures on the "cult of presentism." But for the moment, at least, there is no escape. Walter Blair's *Manual of Reading* contains sets of passages, not all of them contemporary, representing divergent interpretations of identical facts; and, indeed, it contains other features that are usable in the plan of instruction outlined here. But Blair's instructions, perhaps because they were hastily written, would be incomprehensible to freshmen. Since no other text presents parallel selections on timeless problems,

and since collecting them would take much time, the periodicals must serve.

There are almost innumerable issues on which debates are in progress. On the question: "Has the Negro a stake in American democracy that is worth his blood?" there are conflicting articles in 1942 and 1943 files of the *Nation* and in the September, 1942, issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science.* Attacks on liberal education and defenses of it are to be found almost everywhere.

No exhaustive list of possibilities can be presented here, but for the sake of showing in some detail the particularity with which reading and writing assignments must be made, attention can be called to one more set of contrasting views. Arthur Kudner's "Beyond Victory," in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1942, and Stuart Chase's "When War Spending Stops," in *Harper's Magazine* for June, 1943, constitute ideal materials, for they are diametrically opposed solutions for the postwar unemployment problem, the blackest cloud on the civilian's horizon.

When students have read both, the instructor can get them to define the problem easily and quickly and to see the contrast between the remedies that Kudner and Chase propose. In writing their themes, the students can be instructed to begin with a brief discussion of the importance of the subject and to follow it with a single-sentence statement of what they believe to be the relative merits of the two proposals. Since freshmen are most likely to learn proper organization by helping to formulate their outline in the classroom, they should be led to arrive at the following main divisions for the bodies of their themes: (1) a contrast of the effects Kudner and Chase expect new inventions, discoveries, and developments will have upon employment; (2) a contrast of their predictions regarding the length of the retooling and adjustment period; (3) a contrast of the means by which they think postwar prosperity can be achieved; and (4) a defense of the evaluation previously stated.

The scheme is not utopian. It will not make the average eighteen-year-old a thoroughly intelligent reader or a markedly capable thinker and writer. On occasion, teachers will be pained at their students' unreasoning prejudice in the face of evidence or by their utter failure to comprehend clearly expressed points. And, when teachers read the worst of their themes, they will certainly look back wistfully on the good old days when only once a year they required youngsters to use materials other than those they could spin from their little insides.

But, by persevering, the teacher of freshman composition will be able to face the criticisms of deans and professors. He will not have shirked his share of training youths to find, formulate, test, and evaluate ideas — the major function of colleges and universities. His poorer students, those who drop out of school after a year or two, will have absorbed as much as they are capable of a useful rather than of a merely ornamental technique. His better ones will have learned how to use borrowed materials properly, and they will have been introduced to the type of composition that their remaining college courses and their professional work will require of them. The English teacher will have done his best to train all of them to read intelligently and critically, to think, and to express ideas properly, logically, and forcefully.

A NOTE ON THE WRITER'S CRAFT

By

JOHN ERSKINE

By the practice of an art we learn to respect the medium we work in, whether it be marble or bronze or paint or words. Or at least there is the possibility that we may learn. In our callow days we perhaps attend not at all to the medium but exclusively to what we wish to say, on the assumption that any medium whatever ought to be glad to convey our valuable communications. Even at some degree of maturity we may think it stimulating or amusing to astonish one medium with material which would be much happier in another. But whatever liberties we take, the medium remains stubbornly faithful to itself. Though we compel the guitar to play a Bach fugue, it is still a guitar.

This homely truth, though known to writers, is rarely mentioned in the composition class. Just as well, perhaps. If it were mentioned and grasped, the students would perceive that the text books are vulnerable, and that the composition teacher is in the habit of telling professional fibs. Since the fibs are told for a good purpose, to encourage us forward in the literary art, we temper moral judgment with sympathy and hope teacher has not lied in vain, even though he has assured us that an educated person can spell any word he uses, and can put into words whatever he clearly thinks.

Neither statement is true, and neither leads to the perception of truth. We say many things for which there are no graphic symbols, and the vocal tune of a sentence we do not even try to record. As to putting all our thoughts and emotions into words, when we attempt it we usually achieve nothing but indecency. Doubtless our thoughts and emotions, all of them,

can be properly expressed if we use the right language for each, but no single language can express all experience, and to jam into words everything that is on your mind, is to be ridiculous or shocking. Consider Walt Whitman's verbal reproductions of the human body, which would have come off more comfortably in plaster or bronze, or Edmund Spenser's nude goddesses, who would have seemed more presentable if he had painted them on canvas.

Writers might learn from sculptors. It is all very well to understand design, mass, unity, and whatever else belongs to the rhetoric of art, but when you are ready to go at the stone with mallet and chisel, you had better know something about the stone. There is a right way to begin on it and a right way to finish it. Each kind of stone has an aptitude for certain designs, and a natural hostility to certain others. The carvings on Egyptian temples and the carvings on French cathedrals owe more than a little of their respective styles to the toughness or the mildness of the stone.

A sculptor should not be allowed to clutter up the landscape unless he knows what stone will do for him and what it will not. If a strain of music occurs to him, he should not try to put it into a statue. The writer should be as well informed about words. But where in our teaching program do we reckon with this fact, that words can do for us only certain things, and that when we have something to say which would overtax words, the proper recourse is to one of the other arts?

I don't mean to imply that teachers of composition are indifferent to the nature of words. I am merely perplexed that the knowledge which they doubtless have is withheld from their pupils. Some teachers of composition give courses in the science of esthetics, which is the coroner's approach to beauty. While he is in his esthetic attitude, the teacher of composition is pretty sure to divide the arts into those which function in time and those which function in space, and he will say that words are the medium of a time art since they occur in a succession of syllables. He will probably develop from this phe-

nomenon a paradox; though the words must be doled out syllable by syllable, and though the hearer or reader must wait till the very end, what he is waiting for is often a static unity conceived by the speaker or writer as a complete whole, even before a syllable has been uttered—a single idea, or scene, or action. If esthetics is your business, you can dish up quite a lecture out of this problem of conveying three-dimensional or two-dimensional subject matter through a medium which has no dimension but merely extends itself in time.

On the other hand you can say, if you really believe it, that words are the proper medium for extended action, since action, like spoken language, dribbles bit by bit. In narrative, therefore, the sounds may keep pace with the incidents.

If you venture on this agreeable phantasy, however, be careful not to over-stimulate the minds of your audience. They may wonder if the language must occupy as much time as the action, and they may ask you whether you are not over-influenced by moving pictures, whether you are not assuming that action occurs in successive flickers, one for each uttered syllable, rather than in a seamless flow which has no resemblance at all to uttered words.

You as an authority on esthetics may now overwhelm me by citing what Lessing said in his famous study of the Laocoön. Like most of us, Lessing admired some things in art and disliked some other things, which would have been all right if he had not tried to rationalize his prejudices, but being philosophical he gave reasons. He admired Homer more than Vergil; therefore Homer's account of the shield of Achilles must be better than Vergil's description of the shield of Aeneas; therefore Homer's account is better because he tells us how Hephaestus hammered out the shield, blow by blow, and Vergil's account of the shield of Aeneas is inferior because it describes the armor after it is completed. If there were any logic in all this we should conclude that Homer was at fault in his description of the beautiful Helen and the walls of Troy. He described them already built.

To the writer the defect of such esthetics is that the theory can be applied only to something already written; it does not aid in what you are about to write. Grammarians, rhetoricians, estheticians, and writers agree that each art is conditioned by its medium, and they recognize the difference between time arts and space arts, but at that point they part company; indeed, you might think they had never met. The grammarians and rhetoricians, ancient or modern, have rarely if ever based their theory upon a realistic acceptance of the fact that words are a time medium. On the other hand the writers, though they may be poor in theory, use a grammar and rhetoric imposed upon them by their medium itself. There exists a respectable body of craft experience without which no first rate writer could get on, but the composition classes rarely hear of it. It is acquired by the hard knocks of experience, it is learned from the remarks of fellow craftsmen, it is recorded—if you keep your eyes open—in such letters as Flaubert's, and in such memoirs as Sascha Guitry's, or in Somerset Maugham's *Summing Up.*

Let me suggest here one principle of the writer's craft, which though known to practitioners I have never seen discussed in print. The principle is this: When you write, you make a point, not by subtracting as though you sharpened a pencil, but by adding. When you put one word after another, your statement should be more precise the more you add. If the result is otherwise, you have added the wrong thing, or you have added more than was needed.

This principle is provocative enough even in a bare statement, but if you think it through, if in practice you reach the conclusion it forces, you see the startling gulf between the grammar which is taught and learned and the grammar which is used. In a loose way grammar concedes that speech is a process of addition; at least grammar distinguishes between the noun substantive and the noun adjective. But the grammarian leaves with the unwary the impression that the substantive, since it can stand alone, is more important than the

adjective, that the verb is more important than the adverb, that the main clause is more important than the subordinate.

In the use of language, however, the truth is precisely the reverse. What you wish to say is found not in the noun but in what you add to qualify the noun. The noun is only a grappling iron to hitch your mind to the reader's. The noun by itself adds nothing to the reader's information; it is the name of something he knows already, and if he does not know it, you cannot do business with him. The noun, the verb, and the main clause serve merely as a base on which the meaning will rise.

The modifier is the essential part of any sentence. So true this is that intelligent people, in spite of grammar, always put the more important statement in the subordinate clause. Would you say, "When I got up this morning, the sun rose," or "When the sun rose this morning, I got up?"

In practice, therefore, the sentence proceeds from something the reader may be expected to know already toward whatever new thing we wish to tell him. We proceed by addition. This statement may seem to be contradicted by the word-order in certain languages, at times in every language, but this apparent contradiction disappears when the language is spoken and the voice contributes an additional emphasis which is not recorded on the page.

"It's a cold day."

"I'll wear my coat."

"It's very cold."

"Then I'll wear my heavy coat."

The addition is in the emphasis upon *very* and upon *heavy*.

There are apparent exceptions to what has here been said. Our attention is sometimes called to the advantage of omitting all modifiers and confining ourselves to nouns, pronouns, and verbs. The best tombstone and monumental descriptions follow this style, but here, it should be noted, the intention is to commemorate, to remind, rather than to say anything new. Many a visitor to Quebec has felt the eloquence of the famous in-

scription on the monument—an inscription which gives nothing but the names, *"Montcalm and Wolfe."* Yet the visitor must know about these heroes in advance, if their mere names are to arouse emotion.

It is not by accident that one sentence follows another. At least it should not be by accident. Sentences are added by the same principle which should control the addition of words. We speak somewhat carelessly of developing an idea, as though the process of thinking did not begin until the pen moved. Certainly the process of expression does clarify and enrich the idea with which we started, but we are likely to begin with a complete concept, vaguely indicated in the title, and sharpened gradually. The last sentence of the last paragraph completes our meaning. That is why we know it is the last.

To teach this principle of composition would of course play some havoc with our ordinary academic procedure. I speak of the matter in passing without much expectation that school routine will be changed. Don't I know how comforting routine is, and with what reluctance any of us would throw it away and try imagination instead? In my time I found it convenient and morally satisfying to receive themes all of approximately the same length. Freshmen, I announced, should hand in six pages, each page eight inches by ten, the writing to cover one side of the page, with no exaggeration in the margins. But if my students had expressed their ideas fully and if they had taken the pen off whenever the expression was complete, the class papers would not have been all of the same length. You know why I was tempted to ask for six pages. Let the honest craft of writing fare as it might, how could I tell whether the shorter compositions were the work of incipient artists or of the lazy? Had I been myself an artist, perhaps I should have detected incipient art, but perhaps I was better qualified to recognize incipient laziness. In any case, it is on my conscience that having required a literary contribution which could be measured in square inches, I assigned extra

high marks to an essay which lasted through ten pages or even fifteen. Being at that time not much of a writer myself, I thought I was encouraging industry and good will. Now I suspect the expansiveness might have been attributed to hot air.

Just where an essay or a story should end is determined by the writer. Just where it should begin depends on the reader. A book, a story, an essay, should present first that part of the subject which the reader knows. There seems to be no successful variation of this procedure. The method of communication in words is the same whether you are uttering a chapter or a sentence. You must begin with the noun—that is, with whatever you and your audience have in common. If I say, "Charles," and you know who Charles is, we understand each other, but if this name is the beginning of my communication, I have as yet communicated nothing; to say anything new I must modify the previous knowledge of Charles which is shared both by you and by me, I must add a statement, such as "is leaving town." Of course if someone has previously asked, "Who is leaving town?" and I utter the single word, "Charles," that word, since it is additional, will be significant.

We should begin, then, at the point where we and the reader are in closest accord. We should—but do we? Often we do not, and why we don't is a mystery of nature. Though writers differ otherwise from teachers of composition, they seem equally befuddled when they are asked how and where an essay or story should begin. The teachers usually ignore the question, and all but the best writers, even if they know the answer, are usually unwilling to act on it. Though the surest promise of first rate quality in a writer is his willingness to start with what he and his reader have in common, yet writers of the second or lower grades prefer to begin with a preface, which is an attempt to condition the reader in advance, or if not with a preface, at least with an "introductory paragraph." The reader's quite proper instinct is to resent this implication that in his natural and unprepared state he is not ripe for intelligent communication.

Some writers over-labor the start and weary us a little by explaining too clearly what they and we have in common, but this fault is not serious, since nothing is easier than to cut down a manuscript. Some experienced practitioners, in fact, deliberately over-write their first draft to be sure they have got themselves thoroughly launched.

Some writers begin incorrectly, not because they are ignorant of the right way, but because they fear in it an ignoble bid for popularity. They refuse, as they say, to write down to their audience. Just why the direction is down, let him explain who can. Perhaps they are confused about their own purpose. They think they wish to address the reader, but perhaps their real intention is to uplift him, and it is hard to uplift a man after you have met him on equal terms. Or perhaps they don't know that ideas are portable and flexible and may therefore be turned around. You are not obliged to take hold of whatever is on top; it is all right to look for the handle.

To have a noble message, yet to state it in such form that few can understand it, is a tragedy in art. To debase a noble message in the hope of winning a larger audience, is a tragedy in morals. But to arrange your noble message so that, without disloyalty to it, you can speak to the condition of your hearers, is common sense. It is also a triumph of good writing. To achieve it we accept our medium for what it is; we decide what we wish to say; we then orient our ideas so that the reader will meet first what already has his understanding and his sympathy; from this beginning we proceed by logical additions to the climax of the message which from the first we intended to convey. If we are successful, each sentence is a modifier of all that goes before, and the modifying has been done with such sympathy that the reader comes with us step by step, and having agreed with us at the start, agrees with us at the close.

The art of writing, therefore, can hardly be learned without the collaboration of the reader. To teach composition is possible only when the student in our class is aware of his audience, but in what sense can there be an audience for a

student? Perhaps this is the true cause why composition teaching in schools and colleges yields tame results; the student has no readers except his relatives, who read for love, and his teachers, who read for pay. Perhaps for this reason it will always be difficult to impart any writing skill in a cloister. But even though the difficulty is there, we might as well teach the rules which our students would need if ever they practiced the craft.

III

DISCRIMINATIONS

THE WORD AND THE FACT

By

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

The American people seem to be upon the point of accepting, without challenge and almost without debate, a proposition which may profoundly affect the future of the world they are to live in. It is a proposition more often implied than declared, but its essential elements are these: that Mr. Wilson started out to make a peace with his eye on a set of principles, expecting the facts to conform; that Mr. Wilson failed to make a peace; that we, therefore, should start out with our eyes on a set of facts, letting the principles do the conforming.

That the practical men of both parties approve the proposal is not astonishing. The practical men have never cared very much for a policy of principle. In Wilson's time they attacked the expressions of principle as schoolteacher's talk. In our time they attack them as "ideologies." They prefer facts. The facts are amenable; the principles are not.

The practical men, however, do not comprise the entire population of the United States. There are men and women in this country who believe, and believe passionately, in a policy of principle. What is astonishing is the failure of these believers to challenge a trend which, whether declared or undeclared, they must have seen. Why have they not insisted that the approach of the Allied Nations to the peace should be an uncompromising approach, the first purpose of which is the establishment of the principles for which the war has been fought?

One explanation may be the difficulty which even the believers in principle now experience in putting the essential principles into words. The war and the uses of the war have

affected the great words of the democratic tradition even in the mouths of those who need them most. The great abstractions of the democratic cause, the summarizing and identifying words which undertake to name, and so reduce to moral perception, the nation's experience as a nation—the generalizations by which men raise their thoughts above themselves—have lost a part at least of their usefulness and currency

A hundred and fifty years ago, in the war of the American Revolution, the word "liberty" was a natural word which came easily and without self-conscious effort to men's mouths. When noble lords questioned Governor Richard Penn of Pennsylvania in the House of Lords in November of 1775 as to the reasons why members of the American Congress levied and carried on the war, Governor Penn replied: "In defense of their liberties." When General Washington had occasion in the fall of 1774 to take a friend to task for his contemptuous reference to the rebelliousness of the people of Massachusetts, the General wrote: "But this you may at the same time rely on, that none of them will ever submit to the loss of those valuable rights and privileges, which are essential to the happiness of every free state and without which life, liberty, and property are rendered totally insecure." When Mr. Jefferson was charged with the task of putting into words the reasons for the adoption of the Richard Henry Lee Resolution, he found it precise and accurate to speak of a "God-given right of liberty." And when Patrick Henry spoke with a purpose to move as hardheaded and sophisticated a representative House as was ever seated on this continent, he did not hesitate to make liberty his cause.

In this war also, and of necessity, we have identified our cause with these abstractions. But no one who has gone beneath the official rhetoric to the general usage will believe that we have used them easily. On the contrary, we have escaped from them where we could, talking instead of the "American way of life," which, if an abstraction, is at least an abstraction which can be identified by homely and recog-

nizable things—by cars, foot, forms of address, habits on porches, manners in meeting. Or, awkward even with the "American way of life," we have taken refuge in "America the way it was before," as the refrigerator manufacturer and the home furnishing industry and the producers of automobiles are talking of it now in the handsome advertisements which beseech us to leave America the way it was for the boys to come back to. "America the way it was" is not an abstraction at all. It can be seen in four-color reproductions of paintings of charming village streets. It can also be seen, if one wishes to see it, in the mile after mile of unpalatable and unreproved squalor which spreads from the Chicago airport, say, to the towers of Chicago's Loop.

II

No one in his senses would suggest that our generation seeks to escape from the great words into these paraphrases, these equivocations, because of any lack of belief in the things for which the great words stand. The refusal of the American people in 1940 and 1941 to follow the treacherous propaganda which urged them to trust their liberty and freedom and democracy to the width of the Atlantic Ocean is proof enough that the American people continue to value democracy and liberty and freedom. What many in our generation doubt is not the thing itself but precisely the words in which the thing is said—precisely the Word. As inheritances from our forefathers, carrying the emotions of an entire history, a great people, a noble past, we accept the words for liberty and freedom as we accept the battle flags in the armories. But as words for ourselves, words for our present, words for our own time, we find it difficult to use them. It is not because Wilson's oracular declarations were untrue that we neglected them so strangely in war. History has proved them truer than even Wilson knew. It is because the phrase, "a world safe for democracy," is, in its words, in its rhetoric, a phrase we cannot easily or naturally make our own. We

believe in the intentions of the words, but the words themselves embarrass us, leaving us conscious of the silence into which they fall.

For the most part our embarrassment is felt rather than reasoned. The revolt against the Word—and "revolt" is too explicit and dramatic and precise a term—is a revolt not so much of the head as of the heart. There were a few attacks, during the generation of the literary belittlement, on the abstract words of the democratic tradition, and at least one professor of psychology has been able to attribute the perpetuation of modern warfare to the prevalence of such "fictional" and "unreal" "catchwords" as freedom, liberty, equality, humanity, and tolerance—a proposition which would have interested Thomas Jefferson. But the uneasiness of the people themselves in the presence of these particular abstractions is not based upon any such intellectualism. It is not indeed based at all. It exists. And it exists for reasons which are not too difficult to state.

Any word becomes unwieldy and overconscious of itself when its meaning in action is inferior to its meaning in emotion — when its spread of emotional sail overbalances the lead and oak that ought to carry cargo. And any word which is used repeatedly to evoke emotion without the evocation of an action to which emotion can attach loses the balance upon which its seaworthiness depends. Even the great abstractions which attempt to translate experience into idea cannot altogether break their continuing derivation from experience without reducing their ideas to tags and slogans.

Freedom from the present interference of an arrogant, ill-advised, and ill-bred British king, named George the Third is a good word, hard as an axehead, and as useful. Liberty to live as General Washington and Mr. Jefferson meant to live, in spite of Lord North and the Tory gang, is a word to put in a speech in a Chamber of Burgesses, or on the parchment of a Declaration, or in the words of a song, or on the walls of a tavern — as good and as natural and as precise in

one place as another. But freedom and liberty as abstractions with no present application in this time are banners without staffs to fly from.

I do not suggest that the whole reason for our present uneasiness in the use of words we desperately need is our failure to state in positive and revolutionary language the purpose of the war just ended. The revolt against the Word, and particularly against the abstract terms that bear the burden of an impotent emotion, had grown of itself in this country, and long before the war, under the pounding of a press and radio which, year after year, used greater and greater quantities of less and less precise and relevant words to persuade the American people to buy, or to eat, or to vote, or to wear, or to love a book, or to live in a suburb, or to hate a particular public official, or to accept a special theory of economics, or to purchase a lot in one cemetery rather than another. But though the communications industry must carry its heavy share of responsibility for the degeneration of the Word, the immediate responsibility for the loss of meaning of the words we now need most lies elsewhere.

The immediate responsibility rests with the governments which declared or did not declare the democratic purpose in the war.

III

To use freedom as the definition of the cause opposed to fascism, but to be unwilling to define the terrible and immediate danger fascism presents in every country — to be unwilling even to use the word for fascism over months of time — is to make drafts upon the credit of historical emotion which the word freedom had gathered from the lives of earlier men, without giving it a present point and meaning which can make its passion ours. To talk of liberty without declaring, with the precise and revolutionary ardor of those to whom the talk of liberty comes naturally, what liberty we mean to have, and for what purpose, is to trade upon the nobility of men long

dead, and, worse, to spill and waste the virtue of the word they left us. Freedom, liberty, democracy, equality, are revolutionary words. They are revolutionary words always, and whenever used. They cannot be employed to arouse men's minds to fight defensive wars for the protection of the *status quo* or the preservation of a society "the way it was" without destroying their vitality and meaning.

Words are not lists in books. They are shapes in men's minds, sounds on their lips, parts of their lives. Men will reject, and should reject, the words that do not relate to the things they do, the words they cannot truthfully use of themselves, of their own actions. But the danger is that when the vitality and meaning of the words of principle are destroyed, the way will be opened to those who wish, as they put it, to "go behind the words to the facts." The danger is that men will say, as the hardheaded men are saying of peace in this country today and in England and elsewhere: "This time we will get down to facts. This time we will make a peace on the facts, not on the rhetoric. This time we will deal with the factual situations, not with the moral precepts or the high purposes — a world safe for democracy, and all that. We will deal with the actual facts, not with the words—and the facts will speak for themselves."

The facts *will* speak for themselves. And what they will speak will be facts. The facts about civil aviation will speak in terms of civil aviation. The facts about oil and gold and shipping and markets will speak in terms of oil and gold and shipping and markets. They are already speaking, indeed, in just those terms. And the peace we shall make, the peace we seem to be making, will be a peace, in brief, of factual situations, a peace without moral purpose or human intent, a peace of dicker and trade about the facts of commerce, the facts of banking, the facts of transportation, which will lead us where the treaties made by dicker and by trade have always led.

Those realists who believe that facts will produce of themselves their human significance, those who believe that if you

take care of the facts the principles will take care of themselves, are realists of a poor reality. A human society abandoned to the logic of facts is a human society which only an old-style Marxist philosopher could contemplate with satisfaction. The whole history of civilization is the history of the effort, successful sometimes, sometimes unsuccessful, to compel the so-called logic of fact to conform to a human — which is to say, a moral—purpose; to compel the consuming logic of fire to conform to the purpose of light; to compel the murderous logic of force to conform to the purpose of order. To renounce the abstractions of speech in which the history of moral purpose is summed up, and to trust instead to the "facts" to secrete a purpose of their own, is to be guilty of something worse than folly. It is to be guilty of the crime against humanity, the crime our generation knows so well, the crime of abdication of moral and intellectual responsibility. The sickness of our day is the sickness of increasing intellectual chaos—the sickness of disordered and multifarious phenomena, undisciplined, unorganized, and uncomposed. Our need, our desperate and terrible need, is to impose upon the world of chaotic phenomena an order of understanding, a moral order, a humane and human conception. Our need, that is to say, is to extend, and not to narrow, the hold of word on fact — to extend over the chaos of inarticulate experience the order and the government of the Word.

It is not, surely an impossible labor. It is not impossible — it cannot be impossible — to hold against the encroaching ocean of disorders the great democratic conceptions which our fathers brought to words. Words, however those who write of words may treat them, are not objects of fashion. They are living things, real things. They go in and out of meaning, not of taste. They alter as men alter, and for similar reasons. Treated with honesty and courage, they will live forever. Deprived of meaning, they will starve and die. Freedom waved as a banner in a war which does not breathe of freedom droops because its meaning has been taken from it. Democracy used

as a distinction without a meaning has no meaning left. But democracy and freedom, in the mouths of those who dare to speak them and to mean the things they speak, are living words again: new, clean, fresh in the sun, natural and simple.

IV

Two years ago was the year of an anniversary of the Word which was strangely overlooked. It was three centuries ago that John Milton addressed to the Parliament of England a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, which he called his *Areopagitica.* That famous book has been cited many times—and by some who had no right to call John Milton to their witness—as authority for the negative and narrow proposition that a publisher may publish what he pleases. Those who have read the book as it deserves know very well that Milton had no such narrow purpose.

It was not the right of the publisher to publish for his pleasure or his profit that Milton had in mind, but the right of the nation to read. And the right of the nation to read was important, not for amusement or news, but for the truth. And the truth was in books because they were living things. "Who kills a man," wrote Milton, "kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye. . . . 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse." "For books," he said, "are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them."

What is true of a good book is true of a good word. For what are the good words, the great abstractions of a nation's speech, but the nation's inward understanding of the thing it needs to be—the coinage into purpose of the lives that made

it? And how, if the meaning of these words is taken from them by the meaningless condition of their later use—how shall the nation know what it can be?

Praise alone cannot protect the power of the Word or, lost, restore it. Only the people can give life to language; and only they when language draws its life from theirs. If the great words of the American purpose are to recover the vitality and power they once had, they must take their part in the peace that we are now making—their actual part, not their formal part. The war was a war truly and visibly for the freedom of mankind, and the peace must be a peace for liberty in fact, not liberty in speeches. It is possible perhaps to compromise with men. It is never possible to compromise the meaning of the words, for the words become their meanings.

THE FIVE MASTER TERMS

THEIR PLACE IN A "DRAMATISTIC" GRAMMAR OF MOTIVES

By

KENNETH BURKE

At the moment, the slogan for the discussion of motives is "geopolitics." Surrealists would probably prefer to locate the center of motivation in the overlap of waking and sleep. The Supreme Court follows the vocabulary of the United States Constitution for its version of the national motives. Every mythology, theology, metaphysics, treatise on sociology, anthropology, medicine, physics, every political exhortation, etc., makes its own peculiar choices in the assigning of motives. Everywhere you look, people are busy assigning motives for their own and other people's conduct. In philosophic speech, motives are assigned systematically; in everyday speech, they are assigned at random. The many statements about our war aims were all proposals setting forth the motives that, in the views of their authors, should prevail after the war. The Atlantic Charter is a vague declaration of motives.

Obviously, a work ten times as long as the Encyclopedia Britannica would not be long enough to write the history of all the *available* material on the imputing of motives. And for every statement about motives that has survived as an available document, millions of statements about motives went up the chimney, or down the dumbwaiter shaft, or disappeared into thin air over the backyard fence. An almost infinite amount of material is irrevocably lost to anyone who would write a Comprehensive and Exhaustive History of the Imputing of Motives.

I would stress this point to absurdity. For I would make it readily apparent that one could not possibly hope to get a synoptic approach to the subject of motives by a purely *historical* survey. As an alternative method, we propose to work with Five Master Terms. We want to use these terms as a *generating principle,* a general method that would enable you in a sense to "anticipate" any specific notions about motives.

I

The quickest way to indicate what I mean by a generating principle is to consider a case where it is absent. I think of I. A. Richards' recent book, *How to Read a Page.* Here Mr. Richards makes a list of a hundred or so words he considers crucial to our thinking. They are such words as: Amount, Cause, Development, Do, End, Event, Form, Free, Law, Level, Material, Motion, Place, Power, Property, Purpose, Quality, Reason, Relation, Representative, Right, Substance, Way, Work. I cite some I should think particularly important for a Grammar of Motives. But I make the selection without strong preferences, since any systematically developed discussion of motives would probably employ equivalents for practically all the words in the list. Mr. Richards himself focuses his attention upon sixteen of them: Make, Get, Give, Love, Have; Seem, Be, Do, See; Mind, Thought, Idea, Knowledge; Reason, Purpose, Work. Taking them up in succession, he writes very intelligent glosses on them.

As you proceed from one gloss to the next, you begin to catch glimpses of the ways in which the words are implicated in one another. You see how the meanings weave back and forth. Or rather, you get the general idea; the mutual involvements are much too intricate for a purely systematic treatment. But pick any one of the words—and by pondering over it you begin to see that the others live in it and it lives in them.

I might cite this as one of the happier passages among Mr. Richards' glosses, though perhaps a bit over-idealistic in its stress:

> At one point—where one sense of Give joins up with a sense of Get—an archproblem arises and, for some minds, a blaze of light upon it. This may be instanced from Coleridge's *Dejection.*
>
> *"O Lady, we receive but what we give."*
>
> Getting and Giving here are one: our world is what we have put into it. The so-called 'data' are of our making. (Compare See, *below.*)

And were we, following his instructions, to compare See, we should find there considerations leading into the field of Seem and Be. And since what we *are* is involved in what we *do,* we could next move to another of the words, Work — and so on.

Contemplating the list, I think of Shelley's allegorical lyric, *The Sensitive Plant.* Recall the flowers in this miraculous garden, and how the poet says of them

> . . . each one was interpenetrated
> With the light and odour its neighbours shed,
> Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
> Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the poem also tells us that there was a "Power in this sweet place, an Eve in this Eden." There was a Lady, a figure in whom the whole substance of the garden was summed up. From her all the motives so radiated that, with her death, the garden was drastically transformed. But there is no such concentrating Eve in Mr. Richards' garden of miraculous terms. As you read of their interlocking, you feel *on the verge* of discovering some core, or unitary essence, for the lot. You feel that you may be about to move from the successive peripheral glosses to a center. But this movement is left uncompleted.

That is what I mean by saying that Mr. Richards' treatment lacks a "generating principle." He gives you a wheel without a hub. Furthermore, by the use of a generating principle, one could reverse the direction. And whereas Mr. Richards proceeds somewhat from the periphery in the direction of a center, one could proceed from center to periphery.

There is room for both movements; the use of a generating principle would favor the latter.

II

The five master terms that go to make up the generating principle are: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose. And the matter I would here demonstrate is this: If you pause to contemplate this pentad, and to ask yourself how its members are related to one another, you will readily see how the various philosophic systems take form from the logic of these interrelationships. This is what I mean by saying that the generating principle would "anticipate" the various philosophies.

Any rounded statement of motives will contain elements that fall under all five of these heads. It will say what is being done (the Act); under what circumstances or in what situation (Scene) the act takes place; what sort of person (Agent) does it; by what means (Agency) he does it, and for what end or Purpose. If you consider these five terms hastily, they are perfectly clear. Indeed, the more hastily you glance at them, the more clearly you can distinguish them from one another. Thus: the hero (Agent) to escape (Purpose), severs (Act) the bars of his prison (Scene) with a file (Agency).

But the more steadily you contemplate these terms, the greater their tendency to merge into one another. Indeed, they are like the fingers on a hand. In their extremities, the fingers are distinct, but in the palm they merge. And if you would go from one finger to another without a leap, you need but trace the tendon down into the palm of the hand, and then go back along another tendon. As we shall later show, it is by reason of these overlapping areas that many important transformations in thought take place.

A machine is obviously an instrument or means (that is, an Agency). But if you pile up machinery to the point where you get industrialism, in this vast accumulation of Agencies you have a new situation or environment (that is, a new Scene) to serve as a crucial factor motivating human conduct. One's

arm may be considered an Agency; yet as part of the person it may be considered as a property of the term, Agent. I said that the hero, to escape, severs the bars. I called "escape" the Purpose and "sever" the Act. But we might say that "escape" is the real word for the Act here; and then we might offer some motive like "love of freedom" as specification for the term, Purpose. Or war may be treated as an Agency, insofar as it is a means to an end; it may be treated as a collective Act, subdivisible into many individual acts; it may figure as a Purpose, in schemes proclaiming a cult of war; for the man inducted into the army, war is a Scene, a situation that motivates the nature of his training; and in mythologies war can be an Agent, or perhaps better a super-Agent, in the figure of the war god.

In brief, there is an area in which any of the five master terms overlaps upon one or another of its fellows. And it is by using this margin of overlap that we can reduce one term to another. Indeed, by manipulating these areas of ambiguity, we may even reduce all the terms to one of them. Instrumentalist philosophies, for instance, can convert practically everything into terms of Agency. Following this line of thought in a house-that-Jack-built fashion, we can say: the file was the Agency that sawed the bars, the hand was the Agency that moved the file, the nerves and muscles were the Agency that moved the hand, the brain was the Agency that guided the nerves and muscles, the educational system was the Agency that trained the brain, the social values were an Agency that shaped the educational system, and so on, with all working together as Agencies that make for "adjustment" or "adaptation," which we might, from the technical point of view, call such a philosophy's equivalent for "God."

In Schopenhauer's title, *The World as Will and Idea,* we have a reduction of all the terms to the term, Agent, since volition and ideation are the properties of persons. Naturalistic philosophies which treat experience in terms of human beings confronting impersonal nature, give us a dialectic of

agent and scene interacting. Behaviorism, which treats all conduct as mechanical response to mechanical stimulus, reduces our five terms to the one term, Scene, with everything being considered in terms of sheer motion.

We have said, however, that all five terms are needed for a full statement of motives. Accordingly, whenever a doctrine formally eliminates any one of the terms, the term nonetheless lingers in the offing, lying vaguely about the edges of the doctrine. Thus it is always ready to be reclaimed by some advocate of a competing doctrine, who will proceed to show how this term was slighted; and he may next proceed, in overcompensation, not merely to restore the term to its proper weighting, but to more than feature it, creating the whole world in its image.

III

I have given passing hints as to how the featuring of the terms is reflected in different philosophic schools. Let us now consider these correspondences systematically.

In Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology,* materialism is defined as "that metaphysical theory which regards all the facts of the universe as sufficiently explained by the assumption of body or matter, conceived as extended, impenetrable, eternally existent, and susceptible of movement or change of relative position." The article also cites Hobbes: "All that exists is body, and all that occurs motion." And Paulsen: "The reduction of psychical processes to physical is the special thesis of materialism."

Are not these citations enough to make it quickly clear that one gets a materialistic philosophy by featuring our term, Scene? Common modern variants of the materialistic, or Scenic, emphasis define in terms of "environment" as the primary motivating factor. Political philosophies are Scenic, or materialistic, insofar as they account for policies on the basis of "the objective situation."

Idealism, in the Baldwin dictionary, is decribed thus: "in

metaphysics , any theory which maintains the universe to be throughout the work of reason and mind." And elsewhere: "Any theory which seeks the explanation, or ultimate *raison d'être,* of the cosmic evolution in the realization of reason, self-consciousness, or spirit,, may fairly claim to be included under this designation. For the end in such a system is not only the result, but . . . is also the true world-building power."

Thus, unadulteratedly idealistic philosophies start and end in the featuring of properties belonging to the term, Agent. It is so with philosophies that are grounded in the "ego," or "super-ego," or the "generalized I," or the "subjective," etc. By reason of its stress upon the term, Agent, philosophical idealism leads readily into psychology. And its close connection with epistemology, or the problem of knowledge, is due to this same bias; for to approach the universe by asking ourselves how knowledge is possible is to ground our speculations psychologistically, in the position of the knower.

Sociologically, we may note an ironic connection between idealism and the written contract, thus: Before the spread of literacy, a man could break his promise simply by forgetting exactly what he had promised. After the spread of literacy, when promises are put unchangeably into writing, the man who would break his promise must hire lawyers to prove that his words no longer mean what they were obviously meant to mean. In time, our very notion of reality gets its shape from these ingenious misinterpretations, judicially sanctioned as the law of the land. Hence our great body of Constitutional law in particular and idealistic philosophy in general.

Under Pragmatism, in the Baldwin dictionary, we read: "This term is applied by Kant to the species of hypothetical imperative . . . which prescribe the means necessary to the attainment of happiness." We suggest that the distinctive factor here is Kant's reference to *means.* For we should hold that pragmatic philosophies are generated by the featuring of our term, Agency. The pragmatic notion that a policy is to be tested by its consequences can sometimes obscure this fact that

the genius of pragmatism resides in its stress upon Agency. But we can discern this genius readily enough in the very title ("instrumentalism") which John Dewey chooses to characterize his variant of the pragmatist doctrine. The Deweyite philosophy is designed to feature scientific *method* as the primary *instrument* of social *adjustment.*

Mysticism, we would identify with our term, Purpose. Mysticism embraces, we are told, "those forms of speculative and religious thought which profess to attain an immediate apprehension of the divine essence or the ultimate ground of existence." And: "Penetrated by the thought of the ultimate unity of all experience, and impatient of even a seeming separation from the creative source of things, mysticism succumbs to a species of metaphysical fascination. Its ideal becomes that of passive contemplation, in which the distinctions of individuality disappear, and the finite spirit achieves, as it were, utter union or identity with the Being of beings."

It is usually the element of unity per se that people treat as the essence of mysticism. I should contend, however, that it is not merely unity that is the mark of mysticism, but unity of the individual with some *cosmic or universal purpose.* This notion certainly pervades the above citations, as in the references to "the divine essence," "the creative source," and "the Being of beings."

The leading role played by the term, Purpose, in mystical philosophies can be most readily discerned when we observe that scientific philosophies which propose to eliminate "vitalism," "voluntarism," "spiritualism," "animism," "occult powers," and the like from their accounts of motivation regularly herald their attainments as the elimination of "teleology" (a metaphysician's word for Purpose). Or we may discern the purposive element clearly enough in Bergson's mystical philosophy of "creative evolution" and the *"élan vital."* Here the world is divided into two kinds of purpose: living purpose, still in process of formation ("spirit"); and dead or congealed

purpose, purpose that, in having attained its expression, remains fossilized as "matter."

Or we may note that mystical philosophies arise as a general social manifestation in times of great scepticism or confusion about the nature of human purpose. They are a mark of transition, flourishing when one set of public presuppositions about the *ends* of life ("ends" is a synonym of Purpose) has become weakened or disorganized, and no new public structure, of sufficient depth and scope to be satisfying, has yet taken its place. Thus, precisely at such times of general hesitancy, the mystic can compensate for his own particular doubts about human purpose by submerging himself in some vision of a *universal,* or *absolute* purpose, with which he can identify himself.

Paradoxically, a purpose as thus conceived is so "pure" as to be quite unlike the kinds of purpose we encounter in ordinary human experience. Indeed, such is the "paradox of the absolute," a "divine" or "cosmic" purpose would be much the same as no purpose at all, so far as everyday standards are concerned. Just as the mystic oxymoron conceives of a black radiance, a bitter sweetness, a learned ignorance (*docta ignorantia*), etc., so the mystic's "free" union with All-Purpose becomes much the same as a *compulsion.* Such considerations explain why the psychology of mysticism is close to the psychology of neurosis. For the neurotic's God can be a disguised replica of his compulsion; and in communing with his God, he may by an unconscious subterfuge be but abandoning himself to his own weakness.

On the purely philosophic level, we can see how mystical doctrines of Absolute Purpose can lead, paradoxically, into theories of *mechanism.* Indeed, though we today usually think of mechanistic philosophies as *contrasting* with theistic philosophies, at an earlier time the notion of a mechanistic universe was put forward as evidence of God's aims; for the existence of nature as a perfect clockwork was taken to indicate the design (another word for Purpose) of God as the perfect

clockmaker. But later, by an irony of history, it became clear that the identification of naturalistic mechanism with divine purpose could be interpreted differently. Namely, if the clockwork is perfect, we should be able to account for matters of motivation by analyzing the structure of the clockwork alone; and God could be omitted as an unnecessary term in the explanation.

Philosophies that have their *Ausgangspunkt* in some variant of the term, Act, are the philosophies of realism. I mean, of course, philosophies in which the term is given its full meaning. We can refer to "the action of a motor," or to the motor's parts in "interaction," but that is a merely figurative usage, since motors cannot act in the full sense of the word. Their parts move and are moved. Literally, persons are capable of both action and motion; machines are capable only of motion.

The philosophy of Aristotle, and its application in Aquinas, would be an obvious instance. The scholastics, following Aristotle, defined God as "pure act" (*Actus purus*)—and of course, in such a philosophy the term that is equated with God would be the originating term, or ground term. This is no place to attempt a summary of realistic doctrine. But let me cite a few passages from the Baldwin dictionary that will serve to indicate why I feel justified in equating realism and Act.

In Aristotle "things are more or less real according as they are more or less ἐνεργείᾳ (*actu*, from which our 'actuality' is derived). In scholastic realism "form is the *actus*, the attainment, which realizes the matter." "As Saint Thomas says, and as the whole Peripatetic doctrine teaches, *forma per se ipsam facit rem esse in actu* (or, as it is often expressed, *a form is an act*)." Or when discussing the characteristic distinction between existence and essence, the article on Aquinas defines existence as "the *act* of essence." We might phrase this another way by saying that "existence" is *action* and "essence" is *potential* action. Or we could sum it up in a ratio:

essence (*essentia*) is to existence (*esse*) as capacity (*potentia*) is to fulfillment (*actus*). Hence, in the realistic stress, things that exist are called *act*-ualities. Or as Etienne Gilson expresses it in *God and Philosophy,* existence is "an act, not a thing."

With a little goodwill, two other major philosophic strategies can be derived from our pentad. First, we could "anticipate" rationalism by noting that it is the name for the featuring of the philosophic medium per se. Even the most mystical philosophy of the irrational is incipiently rationalistic, in that it sets forth its position in the form of a rationale. Three meanings for rationalism are given in the Baldwin dictionary: it is the theory (1) "that everything in religion is to be rationally explained or else rejected"; (2) "that reason is an independent source of knowledge," and has a "higher authority" than sense-perception; (3) that "certain elementary concepts are to be sought," and "all the remaining content of philosophy is to be derived, in a deductive way, from these fundamental notions." All three of these, you will note, contain the same *methodological* stress. And so the three great exponents of rationalism, Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz, offered respectively a *Discourse on Method,* an *Ethics* presented *more geometrico* after the analogy of the Euclidean method of demonstration, and "the idea of a universal logic and language" which should be to philosophy what the calculus was to physics. Whereas these earlier rationalists said that the world is rational, Hegel went as much farther in that direction as is possible by saying that the world is Reason.

And finally, we may place nominalism, the doctrine that flourished in dialectical opposition to scholastic realism, and that eventually served as a transition from scholasticism to modernism. The realistic doctrine best commended itself "as long as the chief interest was the universe as a whole, and the Church and state as wholes." But nominalism gained favor along with "the growth of consciousness of particular individuality (*haecceitas, this* special uniquely distinguished individual)." Scholastic realism, as the philosophy best attuned

to communal action of the sort that prevailed under feudalism, had stressed the universal, generic, or tribal in its theory of meaning. As a time-saver that flattens out some subtle distinctions, I have suggested elsewhere that realism treats individuals as members of a group, whereas nominalism treats a group as an aggregrate of individuals. Or we could say that, in realism, the genus generates the members of the genus, as were we to say that the tribe gives birth to the members of tribe. But Occam's nominalism, for instance, is distinguished by "the positive assertion that specific individualities, differentiated in themselves, are the real." Thus from the nominalist point of view, "universals," or words for *classes* of things, are derived purely as generalizations about particulars. Historically, then, nominalism was the individualistic, or atomistic, counterpart of realism. But applying the same pattern to the other philosophies, we might also look for six brands of nominalism, to go with each of our six philosophies as their atomistic counterparts.

Thus, all told, out of our five terms we have spawned seven major philosophic strategies or emphases: materialism (Scene); idealism (Agent); pragmatism (Agency); mysticism (Purpose); realism (Act); rationalism (stressing the philosophic medium itself, hence inclined to transform the substance of philosophy into the substance of the world), nominalism (the atomistic movement that can take form in dialectical opposition to any one of the six emphases.)

IV

This scheme has many imperfections, beyond the fact that there are still other brands of philosophy to be accounted for. In the matter of mysticism, for instance, since the mystic *individual* identifies himself with the universal *Whole* or *All*, it would be hard to distinguish between a collectivist mysticism and an individualistic ("nominalist") variety. But some mystics were the founders of religious orders, thereby endowing their teachings with an aspect of *social* collectivism. And

surely there is a distinction between such a mysticism and the mysticism of one whose direct self-identification with the universe elides the stage of social organization.

We might also note, among the many points of overlap among the terms, that Purpose quite readily dissolves into Agent, inasmuch as Purpose is a property of Agents. For instance, Schopenhauer's conception of the universal motive (as a dark Will driving towards clear objectification) is an idealism close to the edge of mysticism. And the Spinozistic conception of a natural urge towards self-preservation (the *conatus sese conservandi*) has a strongly mystical ingredient in its way of merging individual purpose with universal necessity.

Or, with an idealistic rationalism of the Hegelian sort, which proclaims Reason as the very ground and substance of the universe, there are strongly personalistic traits in this concept of Reason that would differentiate such an "objective" philosophy from a purely "materialistic" one. That is, though Hegel proclaims dialectical Reason as the all-embracing ground or Scene, the developmental traits in his concept of Reason are highly personalistic; hence, the philosophy really departs from a grounding in the term, Agent, or rather from a rationalistic merger of properties belonging to both Scene and Agent. An outgrowth of Hegelianism, the Marxist dialectical materialism (which claims to have found Hegel's rationalism standing on its head and to have turned it over) is likewise the stressing of a Scene-Agent pair, a dialectic of interchange between human Agents and natural Scene. The original Hegelian Scene-Agent merger is here naturalistically dissociated into a dualism, distinguishing between a personal principle and an impersonal one. Yet political philosophies are so strongly "activist," that the very country which adopted dialectical materialism as its official philosophy has evolved in literary criticism a theory of "socialist *realism*."

As we have said, since all five terms are required in a rounded statement of motives, whatever term or terms a given

philosophy may favor, the other terms are always in the offing, pressing to be utilized by some competing philosopher who would wrench the pentad into a different position. And all highly developed philosophies must be treated as permutations and combinations of these various resources, so that each, in its plenitude, will lie somewhat on the bias across the logic of the five terms as presented in their initial simplicity. A materialism affirmed in opposition to collective idealism, for instance, will take a different shape than if it had grown out of an opposition to an individualistic ("nominalist") pragmatism. The shades of intermixture should provide one with more philosophic possibilities than are contained in the chemist's table of elements.

As we have used the metaphor of the fingers and hand with relation to our five terms, so with reference to the philosophic analogue we might use a sun metaphor. A given philosophy is like a sunspot, a configuration made of molten metals that have been cast forth from the boiling interior of the sun, projected far enough from the source to congeal into a fixed form. But whatever form it takes, it may fall again into the All-Mother, there to be again molten and transformed, so that the next eruption will be of a different structure. Or, the ancients had a concept of a *panspermia,* an original chaos in which all the seeds of all the universal possibilities lay in one vast confusion. Such a panspermia is the region of overlap among the five terms, the primary confusion of the many powers that take expression in the different philosophies.

Much more could be said about the pentad. In particular, one might note that there are two major pairings. There is the dialectic of Agent and Scene (idealism and materialism, subject and object, people and things) which has dominated so much of modern thought. And there is the equally prevalent dialectic of means and ends (Agency and Purpose, pragmatism and mysticism). In such dialectic pairings, there are particularly good opportunities for the opposed members to change places. Thus, it is the pressure of the Scene-Agent relationship

that gives us, in poetry, the "pathetic fallacy" whereby the imagery of *nature* can be used to convey states of mind in *people.* And it is the pressure of the means-ends (Agency-Purpose) pair that can lead one to ask whether the Hitlerite cult of the state as an end and use of this cult as a means is to be considered a degenerate brand of pragmatism or a degenerate brand of mysticism. The close connection between ends and means favors this ambiguity.

The term, Act, likewise has its partner. *Action* is paired with *rest.* Or otherwise put: the partner of *dramatic action* is the *lyric pause,* the condition of arrest at some one fixed mood, the maintaining of some attitude or mental state, some persistent contemplation that fills the entire universe of discourse in the given poem. There is dramatic action, and there is the lyric rest that is the end of action.

Our word "mask" is a test case for realism, as regards this pairing of act and rest. If we use the word as a synonym for disguise, deception, etc., we are using it idealistically, epistemologically, from the standpoint of the "problem of knowledge." But there is an earlier realistic, or "dramatistic", usage. Thus, in Greek tragedies, the actors wore masks; and each mask represented the *fixed principle* underlying the role of each different character, it was the permanence that went with the change. In Shelley's *Defense of Poetry* you will find the word used twice, once idealistically, once realistically.

The pentad is certainly no invention of ours. "Dramatism" is certainly no invention of ours. We lay claim only to having looked at the matter a bit more quizzically than usual, until the meditation yielded some results. Instead of saying, "Life is a drama and the world is its theatre," then hurrying on, we tried to ponder this metaphor long and hard. As for the five terms themselves, you have a quite similar list in the "five journalistic W's" (which are, I believe, *who, what, when, where, why*). Or there was an old hexameter, used by the early schoolmen in advising students how to divide up a subject into topics:

quis, quid, ubi, quibus, auxiliis, cur, quo modo, quando

Here you have seven, respectively: who, what, where, by what means, why, how, when. Our term, Agency, merges "how" and "by what means." And our term, Scene, merges "where" and "when" (for in the modern historicist mode of thought, a temporal specification is as much a way of locating something environmentally as is a spatial specification: our notion of a Scene is such-and-such place at such-and-such time).

The middle ages, constructing their philosophy about the drama of salvation, thereby automatically possessed so "dramatistic" a philosophy that this aspect of the seven topics did not press for formal recognition. In the modern world, however, we have made characteristic brands of philosophy explicitly designed to assist in the dissolution of drama. I think of such doctrines as behaviorism, positivism, logical empiricism, operationalism, that is, the philosophies of map-making, of laboratory testing, of recording, pointing, checking, verifying, etc. which have impersonal methods as the ideal, whereas drama is intensely personalistic. Whatever one may think of such philosophies, I contend that one cannot place them properly (or spawn them from a generating principle) except by considering them "dramatistically," in terms of their movement towards the dissolution of drama.

There are four major ways in which drama is dissolved:

(1) By the turn from dramatic *act* to lyric *state.* This is not to be treated as a dissolution in the full sense, since *status* is an integral partner of *actus.*

(2) By philosophies of motion. That is, whereas dramatist philosophies treat motion as a mere condition of action, something that the Agent must embody in the course of acting, philosophies of motion *reduce* action *to* motion. The behaviorist treatment of human conduct in terms of stimulus and response is the chemically pure instance of this.

(3) By philosophies of "dramatism," as with our present

essay. We use coördinates supplied by the contemplation of drama, yet our use of them is non-dramatic.

(4) By philosophies of "super-drama."

The last of these is new to our discussion. By "super-drama" as a movement towards the dissolution of drama, I have in mind such a notion as this: Theologies attain a dramatistic expression in the conception of God as a person. However, in such theologies God is not a person such as you and I. He is a super-person. And as a *super*-person, God is *im*personal. Hence, his *im*personality is in effect his dissolution as a person. This dramatistic consideration makes it readily clear why scholastic theology could prepare the way for the secular philosophies of science.

THE GREAT TRADITIONS

Intellectual History Through Literature

By

EDWARD FOSTER

After the war—that is a phrase which we were all using every day. Spoken by a soldier, it was a poignant thing because it suggested release from dullness or horror and freedom for normal living. It implied hope too—a hope which somehow must be realized. After the war—had almost as much meaning when we civilians said it; it carried our unspoken assumption that everything will be different—and better. Certainly that assumption is firm in the minds of college and university teachers of English.

Fortunately, it will not be necessary to fall back upon last-minute improvisations, for the study of literature was moving steadily in promising direction during the pre-war decade. In LITERATURE IN AMERICAN EDUCATION, a paper written for the Commission on Trends in Education of The Modern Language Association, Howard F. Lowry has shrewdly noticed these newer tendencies.

> Few courses are now mere exercises in gushing, vague 'appreciation' of pretty passages in poetry and prose. There is, for example, a widespread effort to give students some critical principles and practical ways of reading that make for true understanding of a given piece of writing, so that it may yield its meaning and its aesthetic pleasure. An able group of educators have been showing us how literature must be studied in the light of the history of ideas and of intellectual movements. An equally gifted school has demonstrated how letters come to life when they are read as social history and as the product of a people. Another insists upon the abiding values to be discovered in the great masterpieces

> of the world's literature, and that it is in these central values that the principles of union must be found if there is to be a wider and more lasting peace among civilized men. There have been many quarrels and much mutual exclusiveness, but each school has made its contribution. The total effect is that literature is certainly not regarded as an embroidery upon life but as revelation of life itself, as the best interpretation of man and his ideas. The student no longer thinks of it as something about a lark, a nightingale, and a lover, interesting as all three of these may be. He sees it as any expression of the human situation. He sees it as the study that can correlate all his other studies; for the very life of literature is in this power of correlation.

My purpose is to propose a fusion of several of these closely related schools and a concrete realization of their programs at the undergraduate level. Is it necessary to choose between literature as "central values," as "the product of a people," as "significant expression of the human situation," as the "best interpretation available of man and his ideas"? Are not intellectual history and social history constantly blending into a single though admittedly complex inquiry? And is not correlation the ultimate goal of all approaches? If we dare to speak of correlation of studies—presumably literature with philosophy, religion, and the social sciences, — surely it is not too ambitious to ask for a measure of correlation of approaches within our own discipline.

To sharpen the focus, I shall be thinking of an introductory course for college sophomores which I have been planning for some time. But if the notions advanced have any merit, they will also be available for the "English Major."

I

Since my purpose is to present in action a group of ideas which have molded our minds and spirits, the subject matter must have a full sweep in time: The Greco-Roman-Christian foundations of western civilization revealed in thought and literature, English thought and literature from roughly 1300

to 1607, Anglo-American thought and literatures from 1607 to 1945. It would be a mistake to attempt less than this. The classical and Christian beginnings are especially important to us now in that they have been dangerously challenged, in that their worth seems much greater now than forty years ago. The English tradition is obviously part of our own, again a more precious thing than it seemed before this war. And we should not slight the American development, for the unarguable reason that it is ours, for the strategic reason that it provides an opportunity for bringing the whole subject right into the personal consciousness of our very American students. The subject, then, is Greco - Roman - Christian - Anglo - American thought and literature. *And* the minds of our young men and women.

If one decides at this point that I am too fond of both the hyphen and the utopian vision that ignores the "sophomore mind," I can well understand that decision. The subject is pretentious. But my impression of the sophomore, the result of twelve years of fairly close contact with him, is that we bore him more frequently by asking too little than too much, that he is quite ready to be interested in very serious subjects when we can present them clearly and powerfully. My desire is to stir him into the most exciting mental and spiritual effort he has ever known.

II

How? Partially by putting aside some of the haphazard framework of literary terminology which few of us respect, and by substituting for it alternative patterns which facilitate close treatment of the ideas which have actually shaped the student's mind. For the long development from *The Iliad* to Churchill's last speech can be organized around five major groups of ideas and attitudes: Mammonism, Christianity, humanism, romanticism, and humanitarianism.

Though a lengthy discussion of these traditions is unnecessary, there may be some value in brief notes of explanation

followed by citation of the writers—classical, Christian, English, and American—from whom we could choose if we desired to represent these traditions fairly. The lists will be incomplete yet rather lengthy, for I wish to hint at the richness of materials which we now neglect. It goes without saying that no practical course for sophomores could begin to consider more than a fraction of the writers named. No one will be surprised, I am sure, to find certain writers included in two or more of the groups, for it is a critical commonplace that Milton, for example, was both a Christian and a humanist—and also Milton. Though the traditions and the authors are presented in rigid categories for the purpose of this discussion, it is not to be assumed that they would be so treated in a course. There our conventional historical framework would be preserved, and a given writer would appear as a whole man, whole artist, and whole thinker. The patterns would emerge only in introductions to periods, in introductions to authors, in the grouping of selections chosen to represent an author. So much seems necessary to guard against a possible assumption that schematization is running wild. And now the traditions.

Carlyle's word *Mammonism* will serve to designate the first, though I use it with something less than the Scot's *saeva indignatio.* Mammonism is not merely economics, nor is it just economic history, whether supplied as background or foreground. It is a religion, a way of life felt as deeply as Thomas-a-Kempis' imitation of Christ. Coolidge was its prophet when he said, "The business of America is business." Sinclair Lewis was recognizing the tendency of business loyalties to swallow all others when he created Babbitt and noted quite accurately that even Babbitt's parson was a "go-getter."

Whatever my personal attitude toward Mammonism may be, I am not seeking to express it here. I am urging rather that we recognize Mammonism as a fact, as the most influential complex of ideas, attitudes, and aspirations extant in Britain and the United States from roughly the seventeenth century to the present. As a fact and a philosophy, it certainly

deserves the same sort of analysis which we have devoted to many facts and philosophies of lesser consequence, an analysis which, incidentally, is not likely to occur in any other college subject. But there is another psychological reason for presenting Mammonism. Our purpose is to grip the student mind, to bring up into consciousness for understanding and criticism the assumptions on which he found his own code. And though our students are more "liberal" today than they were yesterday, most of them are still worshipping at the shrine of Mammonism. A fair and sympathetic presentation of the gospel of business and industry will reveal the student to himself. Ignore the subject, touch it only with disdain, and we merely confirm his impression that the English professor is a pleasant person without the faintest conception of "what it is all about."

Though the literature of the subject in earlier times is limited in quantity and quality, there is enough for our purpose. Tawney's writings and Miriam Beard's A HISTORY OF THE BUSINESS MAN will serve as a tolerable introduction. Without going far afield, one can find aspects of Mammonism in Petronius, Chaucer (the Merchant), Gerald Malynes, Pepys' Mandeville, Sir Josiah Child, Cotton Mather, Defoe, William Paterson, Pope, Addison, Franklin, Joseph Morgan, Adam Smith, Malthus, Ricardo, Hamilton, Harriet Martineau, Samuel Smiles, Sir Walter Besant, Carnegie, Lewis, Ford, Sloan, Eric Johnston, and the peerless Dale Carnegie. With some digging into popular English and American periodicals and novels, one could come upon countless other pieces which reveal the business mind in each of its phases.

Christianity is the second of the proposed traditions. Ignoring personal attitudes and considering the need for clarity, intellectual honesty, and historical accuracy, I like to restrict the term to its more orthodox denotations—a gospel of salvation in the risen Christ amplified only by such doctrines as are recognized by the Roman Catholic Church and by the more conservative of the Protestant sects. This procedure is designed

to avoid, in so far as possible, the tendency of all religious discussion to bog down in vagueness and complete subjectivity and the equally common penchant for reading modern religious conceptions into the past.

Here, as with Mammonism, we are dealing with a judgment of human nature and a whole way of life. Man, according to the orthodox Christian, is depraved until redeemed by grace or by the efficacy of the sacraments—or both; and life is a difficult pilgrimage toward happiness beyond the grave. Yet however unworldly in its essential doctrine, Christianity has sought to regulate every aspect of life on earth. With varying success from the time of the primitive church to the present, clergy and laity have expressed and frequently enforced their views in the spheres of business, government, international relations, education, science, and the arts. Ideally, and frequently in fact, Orthodoxy has been a whole way of life. Jesus meant what he said in the terrible words, Ye cannot serve God and mammon. And though Orthodoxy has frequently obscured or forgotten this teaching, there has always been a remnant with the churches to whom it has been sacred.

Because conventional surveys always include Langland, Donne, Herbert, Milton, Bunyan, Edwards, Newman, and frequently a bit of the Bible, one might conclude that I am suggesting nothing not already established. Actually, I am thinking of a presentation of Orthodoxy much fuller and more penetrating than is now customary—enough religious writing to represent the long development with some accuracy and a willingness to take the religious content seriously. Particularly, we need understanding of the place of religion in the whole pattern of living characteristic of each era. We can also be certain that, here and there as he moves through the program, the student will sharpen his awareness of the nature and the background of his own doubts and convictions.

The list which follows includes no Unitarians, no Christian Humanists, on the theory that they properly belong to other traditions; Roman Catholic authors after the Middle

Ages are almost ignored because of my own sheer and unforgivable ignorance. Yet there is a vast wealth of doctrine and devotion from which to choose: Moses, Hosea, Amos, the two Isaiahs, the authors of the Law, the Gospels, St. Paul, St. Augustine, William of Massington, Rolle of Hampole, the Pearl Poet, Langland, Wyclif, Ball, Cranmer, Latimer, Hooker, Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, Browne, Taylor, Cotton, the Mathers, Ames, Baxter, Williams, Milton, Fox, Bunyan, Toland, Tindal, Law, Butler, Edwards, John Wesley, Johnson, Woolman, Chauncy, Jefferson, Paley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, Lyman Beecher, Newman, Hawthorne, Bushnell, Tennyson, Browning, Ruskin, Arnold, Kingsley, Frothingham, Emily Dickinson, G. M. Hopkins, Francis Thompson, E. C. Smyth, Harold Frederic, Strong, Gladden, Rauschenbusch, Chesterton, Belloc, Gore, Inge, Streeter, Temple, P. E. More, T. S. Eliot, Machen, Coffin, Fosdick, Whitehead, W. M. Horton, MacIntosh, C. S. Lewis, and the Niebuhrs, Reinhold and Richard.

A full consideration of the practical and legal difficulties in the way of a tolerably full and historical treatment of the Christian tradition would require another article. But this much may be said briefly. For certain institutions, the idea is obviously impractical. In many others, because of the increasing liberalism of religious educators and local churchmen and the growing feeling among college administrators that religion deserves more consideration than it now receives, this suggested innovation would be welcome.

The third tradition, humanism, has none of the sharpness of line which we found in Mammonism and Orthodoxy. So great is the confusion surrounding our conceptions of humanism that every definition beyond the flatly historical tends to become a curse or a battle-cry. Yet for reasons which will later appear, some attempt to pin down the term must be made. In general, I shall follow the "academic" humanists.

The humanist rejects the readings of man's nature charac-

teristic of Mammonism, Orthodoxy, and modern mechanistic philosophy. Man, he feels, is or at least can be something more than lust for money, power, and comfort; man was not born into original sin nor is it wise for him to live with his eyes forever fixed upon heaven or hell; man is not merely a bundle of conditioned reflexes nor the sum of his biochemisms nor a complex labeled *body-mind.* Man is *man.* As man, he can use the knowledge and wisdom of the past for ordering his life in the present; he can use both effectively by employing reason and critical intelligence. As a moralist, the humanist leans toward moderation and balance; he distrusts absolutes; he fears all extremes. When the humanist does not ignore the realm of business and politics, he is likely to accept laissez-faire and Toryism in the best sense of both terms. In literature, he is of course a classicist. In general, the humanist's outlook is always respectable, sometimes mellowly philosophical, occasionally heroic in the manner of old tragedy.

This attempt at definition may serve to suggest the position of the academic humanists and of many of the ancient and modern writers whom they admire. It does not include the influential Christian Humanism of recent years, for the latter is "tainted" with humanitarianism. It also excludes—to its own impoverishment—scientific humanists. To hint that they might well be admitted to the inner circle, I have included some of their names in the list below.

The writers from whom we might select to represent this tradition are Homer, Thucydides, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Virgil, Cicero, Chaucer, More, Shakespeare, Jonson, Milton, Williams, Dryden, Congreve, Locke, Pope, Swift, Addison, Byrd, Fielding, Johnson, Austen, Burke, Jefferson, John Adams, Wordsworth, Cooper, Holmes, Thackeray, George Eliot Arnold, Butler, Howells, William and Henry James, Henry Adams, Housman, Meredith, Galsworthy, Wharton, Cather, Glasgow, Frost, Bridges, More, Babbitt, Hulme, T. S. Eliot, Santayana, Lippmann, Agar, MacLeish,

Bertrand Russell, Julian Huxley, C. J. Keyser, J. S. Haldane, and Oliver Reiser.

If one fully accepted all the strictures against romanticism made by its enemies, one would include it among the major traditions only because it is still much alive in popular literature, the movies, and the student's mind. But the writings of Brooks, Faucett, Barzun, and others indicate that the wave of hostility to romanticism has almost spent its force, that we are now nearly ready for a just appreciation of its elements of permanent worth.

For romanticism, as Barzun has pointed out, was not just disease; not just medievalism; not just pantheism; not just revolt against humanistic discipline and order; not just—the most absurd charge—embryonic Fascism. It was rather a reassertion of man's whole nature — including emotion, intuition and the urge toward perfection—elements too closely restricted by a humanism worn thin, a decadent Christian Orthodoxy, a soulless Mammonism, a science bleakly mechanistic. Romanticism, however vague and disorganized in its practical tenets, was a new lay religion in which goodness, beauty, and truth were usually substituted for the Christian God.

Whatever the perversities of some romantics, the general tendency of the movement was toward much that is still valuable in modern thought: faith, albeit too rapturous, in human nature; an ethic stressing positive goodness and full self-expression; a political theory grounded in liberty yet tempered in many romantics by concern for the victims of unregulated business and industry; an economics which frequently rejected the abstractions of classical theory and accommodated itself to Utopian socialism. Of their writings, it is necessary only to remark that despite all flaws and all excesses, they are rarely dull and never lacking in energy and intensity.

In marshalling writers who are significantly romantic, I have followed Barzun's analysis of the late nineteenth, and

twentieth century offshoots of the movement and have also included figures like Robinson, Hemingway, and Faulkner who tried but failed to escape from the romantic quest. These are the names: Homer of the ODYSSEY, Plato, Virgil, the romancers of the Middle Ages, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Donne, Chapman, Beaumont, Fletcher, Dryden, Otway, Steele, James Thomson, Collins, Gray, Burns, Blake, Godwin, Jefferson, de Crevecoeur, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Lamb, the Brontes, Freneau, Irving, Cooper, Poe, Emerson, Thoreau, Parker, the English and American Utopians, Whitman, Melville, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Rossetti, Morris, Twain, Howells, Henry James, Stevenson, Dickinson, Housman, Masefield, Conrad, Yeats, Robinson, Sandburg, Millay, Lowell, Lawrence, Coward, O'Casey, Priestley, Wolfe, Steinbeck, Hemingway, Faulkner, Brooks.

"The humanitarian," according to Crane Brinton, "seeks to lessen suffering and increase enjoyment among all forms of sentient life. He presumably feels friendship toward the object of his concern, yet his strongest emotion is a kind of imaginative flinching before the spectacle of inflicted pain. . . . Where humanitarian efforts seek a positive addition to happiness . . . , it is to make the unhappy happy rather than the happy happier."

If Christian Orthodoxy were merely the golden rule or the parable of the good Samaritan realized in all aspects of living, if the mystery elements were excluded, if the churches —Catholic and Protestant—had inflexibly opposed cruelty and mitigated suffering throughout their history, humanitarianism would be nothing other than applied Orthodoxy. And it is only fair to note that many humanitarian ideas and projects can be traced to the churches directly or to their influence upon individual minds. But modern humanitarianism, arising in the eighteenth century, is often a protest against the churchman's tendency to concern himself with individual sin, to ignore the sins of society against the individual. Listening to preachers

who say like one I heard recently, "We don't care what man does; we don't care what man says; we just praise the Lord," the humanitarian is likely to seek friendship and support among scientists and free-thinkers.

Dismissing innate depravity, he considers environment the chief factor in molding human nature—hence his urge to improve this, that, or the other aspect of the physical or social setting of human life. Though uncommitted to any particular ethical system, he has little faith in either the religious or humanistic approaches and is likely to favor utilitarianism or an ethics derived from psychology. In political and economic thought, some of the eighteenth and nineteenth century humanitarians were conservative; they were motivated, it seems, not by equalitarianism but rather by the Tory concept of *noblesse oblige.* More recently, the humanitarian is likely to find himself in the camps of the equalitarians and the liberals, new style, or among the non-Marxian socialists. As for his writing, it is often a pamphlet, a tract, a report—forms which cannot pretend to enduring significance; yet more frequently than we usually recognize, his ideas get into forms which we do accept as literature. For I assume that humanitarianism is often the dynamic thrust in what we call the literature of social protest or social criticism, and even in proletarian drama and fiction when the Marxian doctrine is not the chief ingredient.

Here are some of the writers who form this tradition: Jesus, Marcus Aurelius, More, Cotton Mather, Sewall, Defoe, James Thomson, Fielding, Sterne, Penn, Franklin, Goldsmith, John Howard, Stanhope Smith, Burns, Blake, Paine, Godwin, Wollstonecraft, Byron, Shelley, Hunt, Owen; the English and American Utopian, Wilberforce, Bentham, Parker, Phillips, Stowe, Whitman, Dickens, Shaftesbury, Ruskin, E. B. Browning, Hood, Ebenezer Elliott, Kingsley, Gaskell, Reade, Mill, Lincoln, Twain, Ingersoll, Bellamy, George, Garland, Howells, Freeman, Crane, Markham, Riis, Shaw, Wells, Galsworthy, Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, Wilson, Sherwood Anderson, O'Neill,

Rice, Dos Passos, Dewey, Steinbeck, Hemingway, Odets, Priestley, and the Christian Humanists.

III

Clearly, each of these traditions contains valuable insights; clearly, each is at this moment influencing the thought, feeling, and action of our students. And each can be represented adequately in courses for either sophomores or advanced students providing that we, as teachers and scholars, are willing to revise our standards of selection and spend some effort in assembling a body of materials which we have largely ignored in the past. Here I am thinking not only of writers in the traditions of Orthodoxy and Mammonism who never appear in programs in literature but also neglected writings of standard authors.

But much of the cogency of this approach depends upon another consideration—our own attitude toward the relationship between the traditions and toward the classical and Anglo-American history of which the traditions form a considerable part. I propose that we follow the lead of a number of distinguished thinkers in taking history and tradition as matters of life and death.

Here is a conscious revolt against two tendencies in literary and general history which are outmoded but still influential among ourselves. The first is the Isn't-the-past-perfectly-jolly? attitude which we have cultivated for many, many years. Otherwise expressed, it is the fallacy of the Golden Age, which usually turns out to be any period in which the scholar has specialized. I do not wish to be misunderstood. Merry England was undoubtedly merry at certain times; certainly the lusts of kings and poets were truly lusty; and I should be the last to condemn what fun can be found in old jollity or ancient passion. But heartiness is not a justification for suppressing what was ugly, painful, unjust in the past—a tendency all too common in our presentation of what we foolishly call "background." To be concrete, I ask that while we discuss the

"Peace of the Augustans," we also mention rigid social stratification, orgies of speculation, abysmal poverty and illiteracy among the masses, and their significant tendency to escape by way of gin-guzzling.

The second is the tendency to write history around such concepts as Progress or the Great Tradition—to view man's long development as the march of serried columns toward whatever goal the historian finds attractive. In general, conflict among classes and traditions is obscured; tragic blunders and wrong turns are overlaid with a frosting of judicial language.

Obviously, the facts of history will remain the facts of history; but it is about time that the interpretation of the facts should begin to show some influence of an understanding of man's present plight. For at this moment, the goal of the historical process, as far as we can observe, is depression and war, both colossal in scope but mean in moral and intellectual values. History is a tragedy in the modern manner—the rather meaningless fall of an unheroic protagonist. Hence we might well consider borrowing something from Reinhold Niebuhr's approach to the past, something of his recognition of the urgency of the inquiry, something of his contrite spirit in reviewing old failures in order to avoid repeating them in the present and future. I am simple enough to believe that one who is bold in search and thought but humble in spirit can learn something from history.

In that spirit, we could find fresh meaning in old conflicts between traditions, perhaps even hope that in our minds and in the minds of our students some conflicts could be partially resolved. The phrase *partially resolved* is carefully chosen. For I cannot believe that we as teachers or critics should at this time attempt a tight synthesis whether it be based upon the five traditions suggested here or any other similar scheme. I cannot believe that we should lead or force our students into such synthesis. Today the wisdom and knowledge for synthesis is not in us because—to cite just one reason—

the human significance of science is too vague for trustworthy appraisal.

But without going the whole way toward a fully consistent formulation of a *weltanschauung,* we can go much further than we go today. Though "the very life of literature," according to Professor Lowry, "is in this power of correlation," few of us have made much use of it, and partially, I feel, because we have not grouped our materials in such a way that correlation is possible. To be sure, we have used sounding phrases like the *eternal verities* and *perdurable values,* but have we thought very much in the area where values are conflicting? Do we not tend to play with values almost as carelessly as Van Wyck Brooks when he offers the "great themes" on page 172 of the OPINIONS OF OLIVER ALLSTON as "courage, mercy, love, and honour" and two pages later as "courage, justice, love and mercy"?

Without assuming an omniscience which we do not possess, we can do much. We can keep the general historical framework of our courses and present authors as whole men and minds and, at the same time—in introductions to periods and to individual writers, in the grouping of selections which represent the individual—maintain a firm pattern of continuously developing ideas. Whether the course be planned for sophomores or upperclassmen, we can reserve time at its conclusion for pulling the traditions together, summarizing each in all of its fullness, recognizing the points at which rival patterns agree and disagree. In so doing, we can create a situation in which the student can dismiss extreme positions and select for himself something of the best of what remains. He can make for himself the most useful syncretism of which he is capable. Though it will not be a "home for the spirit" in the full sense of that poignant phrase, it may well be something stronger and more comely than the jerry-built shack in which he now lives.

IV

The full realization of this program would entail research, thought, much writing, and careful reappraisal of the introductory course and perhaps the whole English Major. Even if desirable, such revision would require considerable time. Yet something in this direction could be done at once within the framework of existing courses. Three of the traditions — humanism, romanticism, and humanitarianism—are well represented within existing courses; Christian Orthodoxy is now recognized to a degree. By merely placing greater stress on ideas and their continuity, we could, with respect to these traditions, approximate the suggested approach. Mammonism could be introduced as what we call parallel reading. As for the recognition of history and the traditions as matters of serious consequence, that involves not so much materials as the willingness of the teacher to undertake the task.

Would the attempt be worth the effort entailed? Certainly, intellectual history is not the whole solution of the problems of the English Department. Literature as an art still remains, and there is great promise in certain recent tendencies in criticism conceived as an art of a very exacting type. They should be supported and encouraged. But this may be said for the five traditions. At a time when our knowledge and our wisdom — however small or great — are deeply needed, they provide a method and a spirit with which we could return to the realm of momentous issues. In the past, we teachers of literature have thought much about little. Now we are ready to think much about much.

LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

Methods of Studying Their Relations

By

AUSTIN WARREN

ontemporary critics appear ultimately divisible into two groups: the first, which may claim the Aristotle of the *Poetics* as its sponsor, addresses itself to the study of the artifact,—the poem, the play, the novel— with reference to its internal relationships, its formal structure, the interplay and interpenetration, as parts of its total meaning, of rhythms, phonetic sequences, images, conceptual statement, and dramatic counterpoint. It would be presumptuously absurd—especially for men of letters—to dismiss this theory of criticism, since as specialists their obvious and unique business is the analysis and evaluation not of the *ideas* conveyed in and through literature (which would be the job of the scientist, the economist, the theologian, or the philosopher) but of the craftsmanship discoverable in the artist's working or shaping of his materials, his methods of handling ideas imaginatively, his symbolic or mythic or dramatic incarnation of them. And in England and America, both moralistic lands, we have never had enough of informed, patient, and exact aesthetic analysis and need rather to urge forward than discourage such few qualified practitioners as exist.

The second group of critics regards the values of art as instrumental to other values,— economic, political, ethical, religious. Its ultimate sponsor is Plato; and, concerned as it is with the relation of literary to other values, it may be called extrinsic criticism. In general, the first group characterizes the aesthetic attitude as cathartic, detached, contemplative; the

second holds art to be incitory, an invitation to action. These opposed emphases may be stated more strongly, and regarded as hostile to one another,—mutually exclusive, as, at the last ditch, they probably are. But we are not yet forced to the last ditch; and present strategy for criticism would rather indicate a popular front.'

As a matter of fact, the more sensitive and ranging minds in both groups feel the necessity for avoiding exclusion, and seek rather for arrangement or proportion.

We can, with Aristotle and Maritain, reconcile by separation,—that is, deal with the arts twice,—now as poetics, now as politics; we can, with that modified and scrupulous Platonist, T. S. Eliot, urge that, though extrinsic criteria determine whether or not literature is 'great', only aesthetic criteria can determine whether or not it is 'literature'.

Another kind of mediation can be proposed: If one were to arrange all works of literature in a series, beginning with 'pure' literature and belles-lettres and ending with 'impure' (or applied) literature (the sermon, the political oration, the treatise: Bossuet, Burke, Gibbon, William Law), one would, to approach each work most efficiently, consider where, for each, the centre of gravity lay, and deal with each by methods appropriate to its kind. It is apparent, to a student of contemporary criticism, that formal and aesthetic analysts (*e.g.*, Johnson and Coleridge, or Ransom and Blackmur) have applied themselves chiefly—and properly—to poetry; that extrinsic critics (*e.g.*, Fox and Henderson and McCole) have applied themselves characteristically to the novel, which, since the 18th century, has been the *genre* of widest social interests. Analogously, Knights, in search of the *proper genre* in which to study the interaction of economics and literature "in relation to a particular place and time", chose drama in the age of Ben Jonson,—drama, that is, when it occupied a position in reference to society parallel to that occupied by the novel in the age of Dickens.

After this brief endeavor to place extrinsic studies of

literature in relation to intrinsic, it will be appropriate to define the objectives of that particular form of extrinsic study—sociological, as we may, for convenience, call it — which concerns itself with the relations of literature and society. We are concerned—putting it most largely and simply—to investigate the world from which author and book have come and the world into which they go—the world which shaped him and the world which he helps to shape. Such study has always —before as well as since Taine—been practiced, formally or informally—though there are, patently, ages of accelerated social changes in which its importance is more obvious.

Such sociological study may be judicial, or it may be purely descriptive or analytic, seeking to pass no judgment upon the fact it discovers, the relationships it proposes as plausible. The emergence, in England and America, during the past decade, of some excellent Marxist criticism and literary history, should not force us to identify the work of our Group[1] with judicial criticism written from a particular point of view. Communist criticism is the application to literature of special politico-economic standards. But one can also judge literature by Tory, capitalist, agrarian, or Fascist standards; or one can judge literature by moral or religious standards, believing with Plato, Jeremy Collier, Irving Babbitt, and T. S. Eliot that society is affected for better or worse by the conceptions of the gods and of heroes persuasively bodied forth by the creative imagination.

And again, it is not necessary that studies of the relationships between literature and society be more than descriptive and analytic. We have produced some admirable books of this sort in America: it is sufficient to adduce just now Tinker's *Salon and English Letters; Chapters on the Interrelations of Literature and Society in the age of Johnson,* 1915; Ashley Thorndike's *Literature in a Changing* [*i.e.,* Victorian] *Age,* 1920; and Krutch's *Conscience and Comedy after the Restoration,* 1924. The first is a book of skill, charm, and taste, a model within its limits; after sketching the French background

of the English salon, it considers the social forms of English literary life,—conversation parties (levees and couchees) and assemblies, the bluestockings as authors and patrons of the arts, then focusses upon four minor literary *genres,* — intimate biography, memoirs, diaries, familiar correspondence, and conversation, — the forms at which Johnson, Walpole, Fanny Burney, and Boswell excelled. The second considers the topical interest, in Victorian literature, of themes like progress and poverty, democracy and empire, woman, science, and machinery; but its most important chapter is devoted to a study of the new reading publics brought into being by Constable and Brougham, and the steam press, and the serial novel in the age of great publishing houses and cheap printing. The third, a work the method of which may well be studied by those unconcerned with its particular subject, is a sensitive and masterly study of literary and social interrelations after the Restoration of the Stuarts, surveying the rise of the comic tradition, Collier's attack upon its licentiousness, the ensuing reformation of manners and of the stage, and ending with the development of sentimental comedy as theory and stage-practice.

Studies of the relationship of literature to society naturally concern themselves: with (1) the writer, his heredity and environment; (2) the world about which he wrote; (3) the world into which his book goes out, the world of publishers and readers.

The first is, in its largest sense, biography, — the mind of the author as shaped by the social class among which he was reared—*cf.* Wilensky's life of Ruskin, Whicher's life of Emily Dickinson, Hervey Allen's of Poe.

The second concerns the world about which the novelist wrote. Here one has in mind primarily the realistic novel and the novelist who purports to delineate a society or a stratum of society: Fielding, Jane Austen, Thackeray, George Eliot, Trollope, Howells, Balzac, Proust, Dos Passos. One can assemble and exposit the world of each, the part each gives to love and marriage, to business, to the profession, its percentage of mar-

ried to unmarried, its delineation of clergymen, whether stupid or clever, saintly or hypocritical; or one can specialize upon "Jane Austen's naval men", Proust's *arrivistes,* Howells' married women. And this kind of specialization will offer us the Relation between Landlords and Tenant in 19th Century American Fiction, or Liberals in Victorian Literature, or the Indian in the 18th Century Novel, or Irish Americans in the 20th Century American Fiction. Three excellent studies may here appropriately be cited,—Kohn-Bramstedt's book on aristocracy and the middle classes as studied in the German novel of the 19th century, Joseph E. Baker's book on the Oxford or Puseyite movement and its representation in 19th century English novels, and Jackson's *Charles Dickens: The Progress of a Radical.* All three attempt what is necessarily of importance in such studies, — some comparison of the society as represented in literature with the same society as known through non-literary instruments of information: newspapers, histories, documents. The question is appropriately to be asked of the realistic novel: is it realistic? Or is it, at certain points, satire, caricature, romanticism, or idealism? Says Kohn-Bramstedt, "Only a person who has a knowledge of the structure of a society from other sources than purely literary ones is able to find out if, and how far, certain social types and their behavior are reproduced in a novel. . . . What is pure fancy, what realistic observation, and what only an expression of the desires of the author must be separated in each case in a subtle manner."

But it is not merely realistic faithfulness which need engage us. We are concerned not alone with society as achieved but with society as creating ideals for itself, with social attitudes and aspirations. Mr. Utter's *Pamela's Daughters* is a suggestive study of heroines in modern fiction, chiefly English; Mr. Cowie has already presented a preliminary study of American heroines. I am familiar with no study of changing fashions among heroes, but such a study, including Thaddeus of Warsaw, Mr. Rochester, Byron (his own hero), Proust (his own),

Floyd Dell's Moon-Calf, Van Vechten's Peter Whiffle, and Rhett Butler (as portrayed by Clark Gable) is surely long overdue, especially a study which correlates changing heroes with changing religious and social attitudes. Useful, pursued with like method, would be a study of fictional villains and the mode their villainy assumes. We know the mediaeval status of the traitor and the mediaeval attitude toward usury which, lingering on into the Renaissance, gives us Shylock and later Molière's *L'Avare*. To which deadly sin have later centuries chiefly assigned the villain; and is his villainy conceived of in terms of personal or social morality? Is he, for example, artist at rape or embezzler of widows' bonds?

Then come studies of the world to which the writer sells his wares and how his wares are shaped by the necessity for a market. The historical study of authorship as a profession has already been pursued by Miss Phoebe Sheavyn for the Elizabethan period, by Beljame for certain figures at the Restoration and in the Age of Anne, and by A. S. Collins in two admirable volumes on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The story is, in the large, that of transition from support by noble or ignoble patrons to that afforded by publishers acting as prophetic agents for the reading public. As Thorndike urged in 1920, the "outstanding characteristic of the printed matter of the 19th century is not its vulgarization, or its mediocrity, but rather its specialization. This printed matter is no longer addressed to a uniform or homogeneous public; it is divided up among many publics and consequently divided by many subjects, interests, and purposes." In *Fiction and the Reading Public*, which might well be considered a homily upon Thorndike's text, Mrs. Leavis points out that the 18th century peasant who learned to read had to read what the gentry and the university men read; that 19th century readers, on the other hand, are properly spoken of not "as the public" but as "publics". Our own time knows still further multiplications in publishing lists and magazine racks: there exist books for 9-10 year olds, books for boys of high school age, books for

those who must 'live alone'; trade journals, house organs, Sunday School weeklies, Westerns, true-story romances. Publishers specialize; magazines specialize; professional writers — those who live by their typewriters — must specialize. The audiences of some demand happy endings; others have high-brow readers who require death by murder, suicide, or spiritual starvation.

That the history of magazines is an important part of the history of modern culture is widely recognized and variously illustrated. F. L. Mott's history of American periodicalism, which has just passed its third volume, exhibits the utility of the subject and the vivacity with which it can be managed. Under the direction of Prof. Thorndike, Columbia has produced a number of studies usefully tracing the careers of English periodicals, — Walter Graham's *Tory Criticism in the Quarterly Review,* Nesbitt's *Benthamite Reviewing: The First Twelve Years of the Westminster Review,* and Miss Thrall's *Rebellious Frasers,* which demonstrates effectively how much Maginn's editorial policy had to do with the early shaping of Carlyle and Thackeray. The significance of the 'little magazines' for American literary history of the 1920's is under exploration by William Troy and Charles Allen. But the study of magazines has hardly begun; and such study, alertly pursued with attention to the character of the editors and the editorial policies and the size and nature of the subscribers' list, belongs appropriately to the investigation of social and literary interactions.

Of some great publishing houses, the histories have already been told, often in memoirs, — for example, those of Murray, Constable, Longmans, Macmillan, Ticknor, Fields, Putnam; others, early and late, remain to be told. Memoirs of another class useful to sociologists of literature are those of booksellers like Charles E. Goodspeed of Boston, of publishers' editors like Ernest Rhys, of librarians. The cultural history of American cities and regions could largely be traced in terms of booksellers and their catalogues, of university, municipal, and private libraries, their inventories and their lists of circu-

lation. The sociologist of literature must be prepared to move far from purely aesthetic interests. If he is concerned to study the influence of novel-reading on readers, he cannot limit himself to Hawthorne's reading of Trollope, or Dickens' of Smollett, or Proust's of George Eliot. He is concerned also with Lydia Languish and the circulating libraries of Bath. Nor can his study substitute speculation for relevant statistics. The best sellers — and the extent of their sales — will have obvious significance in charting the course of taste pursued by the general or middle-class public.

I leave for the end considerations so fundamental that they might well have come first: the whole question, psychological and sociological, of how literature affects society. George Boas is fond of repeating that Art does not merely reproduce Life; it also produces. It is not merely influenced by its times; it influences. In his *Intentions,* Oscar Wilde brilliantly argued that Art creates nature, inasmuch as under aesthetic guidance we perceive what earlier we had not noticed, or perceive admiringly what before we had scorned, or imitate postures and attitudes made attractive by art. These are all ways of saying that Art is propaganda; and contemporary critics are not wanting who say, with Philip Henderson (*The Novel Today*) that all art is "propaganda for a certain attitude toward life. It may be crude propaganda, in which case it will be bad art, or it may be subtle, but it still remains 'propaganda' in the widest sense of the term." Kenneth Burke, most brilliant and resourceful of communist critics, suggested long ago that even the 'escape' novel might well act as propaganda for a world from which one wouldn't wish to escape, might build up a counter-pattern of society which would lead to revolt against the oppressive and depressing one in which the reader lived.

Against all of these Platonist contentions must be set Mortimer Adler's *Art and Prudence,* in my judgment a masterpiece of 20th century criticism and a piece of resourceful and

sustained thinking. Adler, who is a neo-Aristotelian, regards art as essentially cathartic, and noetic; and he makes an impressive case for the position that art's use to society is through the purgation of socially dangerous impulses, — which means, of course, changes dangerous to society as at any given time constituted. Adler conceives that the issue between the Platonic and the Aristotelian theories can be settled only by the appeal to sociological investigation; and he investigates, as most conveniently available, a collection of monographs on the effects of the movies on the young. His conclusions are such as to reassure the parents of movie-going children and to support the contention that the movies, often supposed incendiary, actually make for the peace of the community.

The case is well-made, — almost too well-made for permanent conviction. It may be true for the movies; but is it also true for literature? Here we have in mind not essayist-preachers like Emerson, Carlyle, and Ruskin (to the last of whom, as Charles Beard has shown, the British Labor Party owes much) but the poets, dramatists, and novelists,—those who convey ideas not directly but indirectly, through myth or fable. We are not thinking of the influence exerted by one novelist's art on another. We are attempting to define the influence of the novel — or a novel — upon its readers. Was Mrs. Stowe really the "little woman who made the great war"? Has *Gone with the Wind* changed Northern readers' attitude towards Mrs. Stowe's war? Have Pearl Buck's novels altered their feeling towards the Chinese? To turn to writers of a higher grade: how have Hemingway and Faulkner affected their readers? Judge Woolsey gave it as his social judgment of *Ulysses* that it was an emetic rather than an aphrodisiac,—a judgment made after submitting the book to a number of competent acquaintances.

The fundamental question of how literature affects its readers is the broadest inquiry before us. We can hypothesize —plausibly, no doubt—that the young are more directly and

powerfully influenced than the old, that inexperienced readers take literature more naively as transcript rather than interpretation of life, that those whose books are few take them in more utter seriousness than do wide and professional readers. Can we advance beyond such conjecture? Can we, like Adler, make use of questionnaires or any other mode of sociological inquiry? No exact objectivity is obtainable, for the attempt at case-histories will depend upon the memories and the analytic powers of the interrogated, and their testimonies will need codification and evaluation by a fallible mind; but—I must agree with Adler—the answer to the question, How does art affect its audience?, is an empirical one, to be answered, if at all, by the appeal to experience; and, since we are thinking of art in its broadest sense and society in its broadest, the appeal must be made to the experience not of the connoisseur alone but to that of the human race.

[1] *Viz.* Section VI, Modern Language Assn., before which this paper was read in 1939.

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LITERARY PATTERN AS A GRAPH OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION:
An Inquiry into a New Field

By
FREDERIKA BLANKNER

The present paper aims to open a door and look down a new corridor wherein literature and social science, in fact all the arts and all the sciences, are fused. It is hoped that by this consideration of relations between literature and social evolution—that is between literature, society, and history—the pertinence of the study of literature for social scientists and historians will be further clarified.

Our concern is literary pattern as a graph of social evolution. The primal cause of literary pattern, as of all patterns of life, nature, and art is a mystery. One thing that we know of this cause is that it is invisible and that in literature, as in the other arts, the reason for the pattern lies in the mind, in the field of idea and/or emotion, — which is to say that at the moment of inception, as at the moment of reception or appreciation, indeed as throughout the creative process, art and psychology, that is art and science, are one.

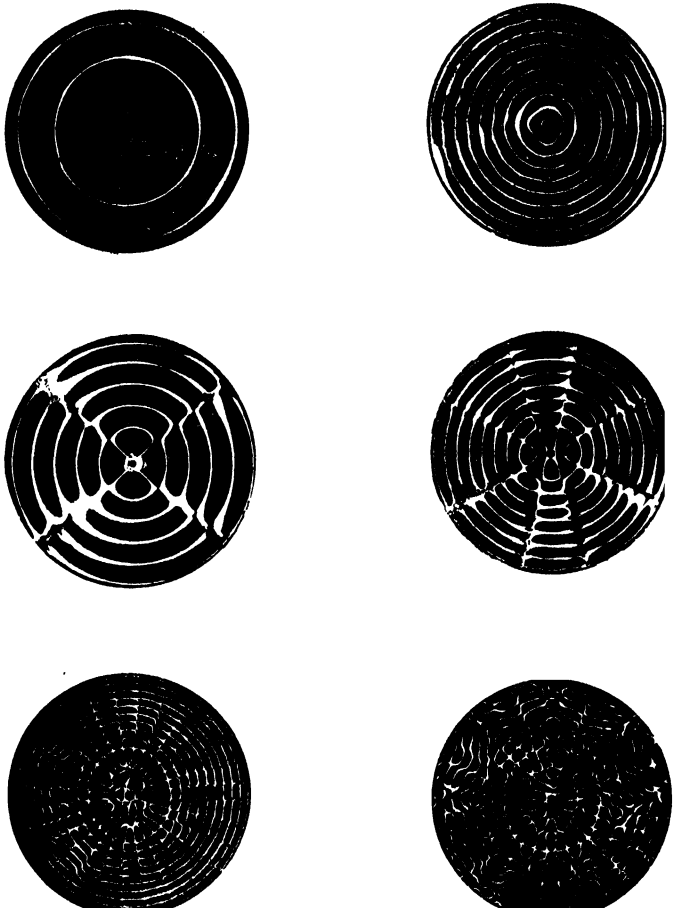
Casting about in the realm of the invisible in which, as indicated, the cause of literary, as of other art pattern, must obviously lie, since it does not lie in the realm of the visible, do we find any processes that cause patterns of any nature, and that therefore might give us a clue to the cause of the patterns in art? Yes, throughout the physical world, as universally as we find pattern, we find an element or condition that unfailingly causes pattern, namely vibration: and therefore the hypothesis that the universally existent patterns are caused by the universally co-existent vibration would seem to be reasonable.[1]

Such vibration patterns in the making are most dramatically shown in the physics laboratory in the phenomenon known as the "Chladni figures,"[2] studied to date only in relation to acoustics and the testing of metals. To produce such a figure grains of sand or similar grains are scattered at random on a suitable sheet of metal, readily vibratory. This metal sheet is then vibrated through the use of a violin bow or an oscillator producing a musical tone, and lo: the grains of sand leap from their original chaos and form miraculously into pattern as we watch. We try again, varying the vibration in one way or another; and, with each different vibration, a different pattern is produced. These patterns are all geometric, and they are simple or elaborate, depending upon the skill and intention of the operator.

One of the most significant characteristics of this phenomenon, as far as our present consideration is concerned, is that just as the vibrations are indices to the patterns, being the very causes thereof, so the patterns in turn are indices to the vibrations being, as they are, their results.

And what does this have to do with literary pattern as a graph of social evolution?

In the absence of other determined cause of the nature of literary patterns as of all art patterns, we offer the hypothesis that such patterns result from vibration in the mind of the artist in exactly the same way as the Chladni figures result from vibration in the metal plate. It will be noted that we speak of vibration in the *mind* of the artist, not of vibration in his brain. Though the fact that the activity of the brain registers itself through suitable instruments in the form of waves does point to the existence of vibration and therefore of pattern in the brain itself, it is not such brain vibrations and patterns that are suggested as the cause of art patterns, but instead vibration and pattern in the mind. The nature and design of brain patterns, as far as the writer knows, still await investigation: they are probably purely geometric and of a much lower nature than art forms. Indeed, brain patterns would



CHLADNI FIGURES

Photographs of circular Chladni figures, hitherto unpublished, produced by Professor R. C. Colwell, Head of the Physics Department, West Virginia University, and used by his permission.

seem to be three-dimensional Chladni figures in the brain tissue, while art forms, being originally mental or spiritual, are of necessity in part higher dimensional and formed in the mental stuff of percept and concept.

On the contrary, the evidence is that the brain waves together with any brain patterns that they indicate are the results, not the causes of activity in the mind. For in the investigation to date, largely in medical science and notably in the field of epilepsy, varying brain waves are accepted as being caused by varying conditions in the brain co-existent with varying mental or emotional, as well as physical, states. Because such activity registers itself in the form of waves rather than otherwise, the hypothesis seems reasonable that the varying emotional and mental states back of these waves and causing them are themselves vibratory, that is that the mind itself is vibratory along with everything else, so far examinable in man and the universe, including the heart, the blood, the atomic and solar systems. It is further proposed that as these mental vibrations functioning on the lowest or material level produce brain waves, in the same way when functioning on the highest or spiritual level, they produce art patterns,[3] especially when the vibration is heightened by the stimulation of inspiration in the form of emotion, mood and/or idea—inspiration serving in the creation of an art pattern as the violin bow acts in the creation of the Chladni figure.[4]

II

And, as the Chladni figure is the graph of the vibration producing it, so in this hypothesis the art-form is seen to be the graph of the mind of the artist during the period of creation or inspiration.

Now the mind of the individual artist, willy-nilly, is part of the mind of the race at any moment in social evolution (albeit in exceptional cases not of the present social moment, but of a social moment past or future) which means that, following our hypothesis further, we find the pattern or graph

of the mind of the artist (that is, his art form) to be at the same time the pattern or graph of his social moment. For, as noted previously in consideration of the Chladni figures, just as the vibrations are indices to the patterns, so the patterns are indices to the vibrations. Each literary or art pattern forms, as it were, one point in the complete social graph. Taking these points in series we have the graph complete.

This clarifies why it is that from the literary or art patterns of a period, taken either singly or in series, we can accurately read either the social moment or the course of social-historical evolution, as the case may be.

For example, there are the periods of Cicero, reproducing in literary pattern the solid construction that was the essence of the Roman spirit; the tireless couplets of Pope expressing the balance, self-conscious and somewhat artificial, of neo-classicism; and the confusion and fusion in the art forms of the modernists, eloquent of the confusion and fusion of the early twentieth century just as their new vision finds counterpart in our new social outlook.

Observing more closely we will note that a lag exists between art patterns and their corresponding social developments, a fact easily to be understood since the mass mind and external conditions are naturally slower in their response to thought stimuli than the super-sensitive mind and materials of the artist. To examine further the last example cited above: consider the present break-down of European geographical, social, financial and all patterns following the breakdown of European art patterns some time ago. Art would appear to be, as it were, the barometer of history.

To return to our general hypothesis, we find that correspondence between the various art forms caused by the same vibration further substantiates it. As examples we have the floral rotundity characteristic of all Italian art: consider the circular sweep of line in Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* and his *Delphic Sibyl* and the curve of Italian melody and of every vowel and sentence even in the spoken language. We

find further examples in the delicacy and certain brittle quality in all French art-forms as in the French language itself, and in the massive and pointed style of the German Gothic seen in their calligraphy as well as in their cathedrals.

In the same way—that is, as results of the same wave acting in different materials, this time different mental materials—we can explain the similarity of forms in Renaissance art though manifesting in different lands and different periods. The writer considers this in detail elsewhere.[5]

To sum up, our hypothesis is that the art forms of a period or land are produced by the social vibration thereof; that is, that all art forms are three-and-four dimensional points in graphs of such vibration exactly as the marks produced by the needle of the seismograph or other similar recording instrument are one-dimensional graphs of terrestrial, electrical or sound vibration.

As originally stated, we have in the present paper aimed to open a door and look down a corridor, seeing what can be made out from the doorway. Further exploration is reserved for later consideration. But even in so rapid and long a view, literature and the other arts have emerged anew as one index of the very essence and substance of society and therefore of social science and history.

[1] This hypothesis is treated by the writer in detail in the initial paper of the present series: "Art, man and the cosmos as vibration design," given for the Modern Language Association of America, Harvard University, December, 1940. Review by John J. O'Neill in the *New York Herald Tribune*, Jan. 5, 1941, Section II, p. 5.

It is treated partly in "New working hypothesis for the formation, structure and motions of the earth," *Bulletin of the Geological Society of America*, December 1, 1942, part 2, Abstracts of Section E (Geology) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, pp. 1845-46.

[2] So named because discovered by Chladni; in 1787. Photographs or sketches of Chladni figures may be found in most text-books on physics, for example that by Franklin and Grantham, "General Physics," p. 667, in "Sound" by Floyd Rowe Watson, p. 102, etc. Reproduction of Chladni figures by Professor R. C. Colwell are to be found in the following publications: *Journal of the Acoustical Society*, April, 1932; July, 1936; July, 1939; October, 1940; *Journal of Applied Physics*, February, 1937; *Philosophical Magazine*, December, 1937; January, 1939; *Journal of the Franklin Institute*, August, 1932; December, 1934

[3] In this regard consider the variety of pattern produced by the same wind in the varying materials on the sea-shore, — one pattern in the sand, one in the waves, one in the clouds and quite others in the grasses and trees, all so different as to suggest apparently little relation to one another, yet all caused by the vibration of the self-same wind.

[4] In the interest of important deductions that should result for the benefit of art creation and art education and as part of the further development of a new psychology of the arts that the writer has presented in detail in previous papers,* she plans to investigate experimentally the brain-waves characteristic of the artistic temperament and of the various stages of art creation in the hope that they may be utilized for the scientific selection and direction of the artist and of the creative genius in general, instead of remaining confined as now to the detection and assistance of diseased types alone.

*"A new psychology of the arts; a working hypothesis offering a new explanation of the psychological process of creative activity and of the nature of art, uniting the arts and sciences in a joint field of physics, aesthetics and psychology; together with a statement of the natural laws governing such process and a new orientation for art method, education and criticism derived therefrom," given for the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dallas, Texas, December, 1941. Forthcoming in the *Journal of General Psychology*.

"The unity of art with science—inquiry into new fields: the physics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of physics," given for the Modern Language Association of America, Indianapolis, December, 1922.

"The vocabulary of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, its causes and significance — a study in comparative literature, arts, and society," given for the Modern Language Association of America, Indianapolis, December, 1941.

"A new explanation of the structural characteristics of classical literature," given for the American Philological Association, Hunter College, January, 1943.

"A new method of education for the composer based on a new psychology of the arts," forthcoming.

[5] In a paper "Art is a wave," forthcoming.

THE LAGGARD ART OF CRITICISM

By

OSCAR CARGILL

A century ago Ralph Waldo Emerson began a very famous address by lamenting that Americans were admired abroad chiefly for their inventiveness. Today we should thank whatever gods there are for this supreme American gift and earnestly pray that it will not languish with the foreseen decline and exhaustion of certain natural resources, but that from the dust and rust of our mountain ranges new shining things may be evoked by the fertile minds of our inventors. The problems of a technological society, however painful we may think them, are intellectually of a higher order than those of Arab existence; and, however much we may lament its necessity, aerial warfare, which repels the enemy far from our borders, is better than primitive brigandage, for it collapses alienating distance almost faster than the mind can grasp the consequences. It was a delusion of the Romantic Age that invention is an unmixed evil: its true status, perhaps, is that of a very mixed blessing, yet withal a blessing.

Emerson's disparagement of mechanical ingenuity implied a sharp distinction between it and artistic invention—a distinction which has ever since been zealously maintained. Bitter raillery from both sides would meet any attempt to equate the two; nevertheless they appear to bear at least a complimentary relationship to each other. When one thinks of the stagnant ages, one recalls not merely the very awkward mechanical contrivances of those torpid days but also the very dull literary creations with which the people were afflicted. The sing-song of the epic, its repetitious phrases and familiar story, over which the tired and besotted warrior could nod and come

awake without loss, and the commonplace courtesies of the medieval romance were the product of successive millennia which saw but crude improvements in travel, in fare, and in lighting conditions. But when a thousand contrivances complicated living, literary invention produced a thousand novelties. Exacerbation and not tranquility promotes artistic fertility. Did not the Industrial Revolution quite plausibly provide an answer to Shakespeare's prayer —

> O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
> The brightest heaven of invention!

One may not get to heaven any sooner by the railroad, as the anarchist Thoreau maintained, but an iron Pegasus carries one into a more interesting intellectual and literary domain than Old Dobbin ever essayed to. Furthermore, the challenge of the mechanical inventor has helped to create and to expand that domain. Piqued when the qualities of "imagination" and "genius" were assigned to persons of the order of a Franklin, a Whitney, and a Goodyear, the literary artist extended himself to prove his exclusive right to them. In one of his most penetrating psychological observations, Wordsworth noted that the new "uniformity of occupations," brought about by the rise of modern industry, had produced "a craving for extraordinary incident" which the newspapers and the literature of his country had attempted to assuage. Yet he himself illustrated the compulsive force of the mechanical innovators by concocting a poetic patent medicine for the fever of the age —an emulsion of nostalgic recollection, essence of daffodils and patient Lucys, and precipitated transcendental vapors. Perhaps the history of modern literature could be written in terms of complaisant and compensating literary inventions to vie with the shimmering attractions of technocracy.

By general admission, the most fecund technological society of modern times is that of America, but the deprecation of sheer contrivance has obscured the fact that Americans have been the most fertile literary inventors, have most suc-

cessfully met the challenge of mechanical innovation. Our genius is for invention, whether in steel or aluminum, or in the more plastic and delicate materials of the arts. So numerous are the technical devices we have fashioned in the realm of literature alone that no complete inventory is possible. Yet it has become almost a civic duty to draw up some sort of list, not solely out of pride but from the fear that continued wrong emphasis and silence may eventually dry up that very well-spring of creation which keeps literature flourishing among the multiple attractions of our complex age.

In poetry Americans have been the supreme innovators for a century. The world has not yet exhausted the amazing hints and suggestions left by the evocative mind of Edgar Allan Poe. But how prolific of distinguished creation was his intuition that pure poetry and music approximate each other! Rapidly illustrated in "The Bells," it was thoughtfully extended to include novel imitations in poetry of various forms of musical composition by such divine experimentalists as Walt Whitman, Sidney Lanier, and Stéphane Mallarmé. Because of its preciosity and its philosophical implications, because of its *decadence,* "L'Après-midi d'un Faune" is prized as the highest creation of this impulse, yet it is a question if the distinction does not belong to "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed." Whitman made the bolder use of the analogy, he understood better the effects to be got with the variation and development of musical theme, and his result contrasts with the Frenchman's product as symphonic composition contrasts with chamber music. The comparison is not strictly just, but Mallarmé's key-picking inevitably brings to mind the "tick, tick, tick" of "Petit, the Poet" while one can hear, with Edgar Lee Masters, Whitman's full-throated roar in the pines. The fact is, however, that "L'Après-midi d'un Faune" is an easily matchable piece—witness Wallace Stevens' exquisite "Peter Quince at the Clavier"—but "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed" is a true original. A case could be made for it as the most nearly perfect elegy in English; for "Lycidas" is

marred by the harsh discords of Milton's attack on the clergy, "Adonais" by Shelley's wrath at the critics, and "In Memoriam" by Tennyson's excursions into evolution. Content to accept it, however, as a most ingenious embodiment of a new principle, one must realize that neither it, nor Mallarmé's poem, nor Sidney Lanier's "Symphony" was the last product of Edgar Allan Poe's intuition. Two notable contemporary instances of "symphonic" construction, poems affording an extraordinary contrast in philosophy, the one decadent and the other liberal, are T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" and Hart Crane's "The Bridge." Each of these compositions is replete with suggestions for new advances in poetry. Some of those in "The Waste Land" have already been utilized by that brilliant group of young Englishmen on the Left — Lewis, Auden, MacNeice, and Spender. But the most ingenious innovation in "The Bridge," the mating of music with technological symbolism, is yet to be employed by another poet with the audacity of Crane. The latter's "The Air Plant: Grand Cayman" likewise suggests how the poet may make the mechanical symbol subservient to his purposes instead of serving the symbol.

To cite only one other poetic innovation suggested by Edgar Allan Poe, his employment of synesthetic effects has extended the sensuous appeal of poetry beyond any other device adopted, perhaps, in its history. Both normal and abnormal persons confuse sense impressions, but it took genius to see the advantages of deliberately mixing them, so that one could write of the "grey rumble of the dawn" or the "yellow cry of the beetles." Elaborately experimented with by the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, synesthetic effects are now sought with regular consistency by certain modern poets. How the initial idea might be combined with an earlier intuition and become still more productive is suggested by John Gould Fletcher's "Blue Symphony." Here the path towards innovation lay through French impressionistic painting or more directly through the eccentric James McNeill Whistler whose "Symphony in White" tells everything.

Americans have done more experimenting with versification in the last century than have the poets of any other nation. Here necessity has been the mother of invention. When atmospheric conditions altered the speech of Europeans settled in America, so that immigrants of all nationalities said *con*tents when the dictionary then insisted on con*tents*, it was obvious that iambic verse, the great measure of the French and the English, did not provide a natural melodic line for the poets of this country. Instinctively Longfellow, who possessed an ear of great acuteness, felt his way towards a different pattern, justifying what he did, however (like the school teacher he was), by reference to the classical poets. Free verse, the emancipating invention of Walt Whitman, was the inevitable product of the long revolt against the heroic couplet, but it is significant that the poet's most successful experiments all throw the accent forward, as the natural, incisive speech of his countrymen demanded. After Whitman, both Lanier and Archibald MacLeish have searched independently for a meter characteristic of Americans, each borrowing ideas under different compulsions from Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. Because school discipline has accustomed us to the recitation of iambics (though none of us will ever read them like Gielgud or Maurice Evans), we find the verse of *Conquistador* artificial, but its line is nearer to our speech than is the verse of *Hamlet.* Curiously, we are delighted by the rhythms of "The Congo" though they are against all our training and march in the direction our most sensitive poets are trying to persuade us to go. Some day, perhaps, despite the animadversions of Joseph Wood Krutch, we shall appreciate the fact that the verse of *Winterset* is better verse *for us* than that of *The Duchess of Malfi.* When Pare Lorentz provided a narrative in this accentuated pattern for the magnificent documentary film, *The River,* American critics were scornful, but the multilingual James Joyce was enraptured. "What poetry," he is reported to have said, "the epic of this century!"

Turning from poetry to the drama, one finds it harder to

think of a modern American play of any consequence which has not had some innovation to offer than to think of one that has. Practically all of the work of Eugene O'Neill is experimental: the man has never adopted a "line" and stuck to it. He is as fertile of dramaturgical ideas in his later work as in his earlier: one scans theatrical history quite in vain to find any parallel to him in this regard. It was a stupid assumption that he borrowed extensively of the Greeks; he does not appear to have much utilized them until long after the reviewers were telling him what was what he was doing. Even his use of masks was an independent attempt to represent the Jungian distinction between *animus* and *persona* rather than a sterile imitation of the theatre of Athens, and for those with perceptions, the use is different and more important. The great virtue of O'Neill is that when he invents most freely his substance is most nutritious. Americans are apparently still unaware that in *Lazarus Laughed* they have the first drama of our times.

Passing over the special developments of expressionism by Elmer Rice and Clifford Odets for the sociological play, and noticing also in passing the novel features of Marc Connelly's synthesis of fantasy and folklore in *The Green Pastures*, the accountant of American invention should pause longest over the emergence of what may possibly be a new American genre. Certainly all conventional designations fail to fit plays like *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *The Petrified Forest*. A development out of preposterous farce, of which the autochthonous *Boy Meets Girl* and *The Front Page* are convenient examples, these plays have a core of social commentary, a tangential realism, and tragic overtones which rip the covers off the reviewer's breviary. Robert Sherwood is the fascinating innovator here, but a work of the first order still remains to be done with his bold beginnings. Nothing is so peculiarly American as these plays: here our riotous humor thinly masks our peculiar hesitations; here our love of action is explained by

a spiritual dichotomy of assurance and doubt; and here modern pathology may best serve the dramatist.

In fiction we need yield the palm to none. Poe formulated the rules of the short story and William Saroyan has violated every one. The lights have never been out in our laboratories, and if *Harper's* and the *Atlantic* ever fail to provide our annuals with new experiments, the *Prairie Schooner* and *New Mexico Quarterly* will fill the gap. We are so accustomed, however, to adulation of French and Russian long fiction that we are inclined to deprecate our own original work in the novel. It is true that we got off to a very bad start; when men like Hawthorne, Melville, and Mark Twain labored in chosen ignorance of what other craftsmen in the world were doing in their field, not much could be looked for in the American novel. Though these men were by no means barren of invention, the novel had advanced beyond a point where profit was to be got from their experimentation. Had Hawthorne acted up to some of his intuitions, his name might be added to the calendar of saints in this field. He toyed with the subjective approach to fiction but never effectively employed it. "The most desirable mode of exist-tence," he wrote, "might be that of a spiritualized Paul Pry, hovering invisible about man and woman, searching into their hearts, borrowing brightness from their felicity and shade from their sorrow, and retaining no emotion peculiar to himself." But he added, with characteristic defeatism, "None of these things are possible. . . ." Hawthorne also speculated on the possibility of making a book out of the content of the dreaming mind and thus anticipated Lewis Carroll and James Joyce, but he never put pen to paper with that as his purpose. The unripe experiments with those human relationships commonly characterized as "Freudian" that are to be found in *The Blithedale Romance* and in Melville's *Pierre* were so obscure and so guarded as to have had no effect in the development of fiction.

But a new day came soon enough. It was ushered in by Henry James, the great formularizer of the modern novel. For

James, every novel presented its artistic problem, to be solved only in some new way. He studied each situation as the actor Macready is reputed to have studied his gestures. Yet there is never the suggestion of the mechanical in his execution that there was occasionally, according to all accounts, in the performance of Macready. No summary of the fictional devices and contrivances which James invented is possible in less than a book, but two familiar examples of his ingenuity may be cited for illustration of the effect he has had upon his craft. In *The Ambassadors,* as everyone knows, he produced the first masterpiece wholly developed from an interior point of view. It will not do to expatiate here on the consummate art with which James revealed to the reader that the mind of Lambert Strether was subtly changing, was becoming cosmopolitan in its general "set," without Strether himself being aware of it, though it is through the context of his thought that we get the story. Restore what James edited out of that context, all the flotsam and jetsam of irrelevant association, and the "stream of consciousness" is the result. Thus James doubled the area of perception and investigation for the novelist, adding the interior to the exterior world, and all later venturers into the former unstable realm owe him something for his bold pioneering. But to turn to a less dramatic experiment of his, epitomizing his usefulness to those who have come after him in fiction: in *The Golden Bowl* he created the worrying and frequently mistaken Mrs. Assingham to clarify what the Prince and the Princess were rigidly excluding from their minds which are separately uncovered to us; without this hint of how to solve a comparable problem, William Faulkner could not have managed at all the extraordinarily difficult materials which he chose as the stuff of *The Sound and the Fury.* One who aspires to be a great novelist should give his days and nights to the novels and the prefaces of Henry James.

Out of her investigations of the subconscious mind, supplemented by those of Galton and William James, and out of her awareness of the new values derived by painting from

Negro sculpture, Gertrude Stein evolved a representation of primitive consciousness in *Three Lives* which is convincing, edifying, and immensely stimulating. Sherwood Anderson, Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, and others, ramifying her discoveries, experimenting for themselves, and profiting by each other's experiments, have created a body of fiction more original than any thus far produced in this country by a comparable body of writers elsewhere in the world. Faulkner especially has been a prolific innovator, literally tumbling out books as one invention has pressed upon another in his mind. His conception in *As I Lay Dying* of an obsessed old man giving purpose to the aimless lives of others about him is really the blueprint for Jeeter Lester (one of the imperishable portraits in our fiction) and his tribe in *Tobacco Road.*

Starting less originally by borrowing from German expressionism in an effort to create the discontinuity which he believed characteristic of our times, John Dos Passos missed distinction and achieved only chaos in *Manhattan Transfer;* but doggedly returning to his problem in the first volume of *U. S. A.,* he mastered it by inventing three very ingenious devices for locating chronologically the non-sequential episodes of his novel—the "Camera Eye," the "Newsreel," and the poetic "timely" biography. Dos Passos has shown that men may live and suffer in the rubble of our times; he has demonstrated that it is possible artistically to provide a *milieu* of chaos without quite banishing meaning from the novel. All of this background of experimentation explains why novelists like Thomas Bell, John Hersey, and Lillian Smith may do such astonishingly mature work very early in their creative careers.

II

Though we have cause to exult in the inventive imaginations of our poets, our dramatists, and our novelists, as this rapid survey indicates, we have no cause to rejoice in either the contrivances or the accomplishments of our critics. There

are reasons why criticism is the most retarded of all the literary arts, and these reasons will shortly be developed, but there is with American criticism the especially puzzling problem of *exaggerated retardation,* for the American critic (with a few academic exceptions) keeps company with men of unrivaled inventive powers. In a land and season of fertility, he is the notoriously barren spirit. Perhaps it is revelatory of the reasons for the low estate of American criticism that a scholar of the Far West, who had the fewest associations with men of letters, Vernon L. Parrington, should achieve the securest eminence as a critic in our times, despite very great limitations in sensibility and craftsmanship. Contact with the creative artist in America would seem to have produced only subserviency in the critics, subserviency of the lowest order. Or rather, is it not intimacy with the publishers, for what indication is there of spiritual relationship between the artist and the established weigher and gauger in America? When common hucksters are looked to as discriminatory judges of literary excellence, the golden calf has been elevated and the profession is prostrate before it. Shades of Thomas Shadwell and Richard Savage, it is time to do you honor now! For you starved at least to write what you believed, though you were generally in error, but the successful American reviewer battens off the highly ingenious business of book promotion, where he has done all his contriving. One style serves such a man, whether he writes for the *Saturday Review* or the Book-of-the-Month Club *News;* in this country only it is possible for a publisher to use in its entirety the leading review of a "distinguished" Sunday book supplement as advertising copy for a novel. How can anyone who has a part in this business be sufficiently emancipated for the untrammelled effort necessary to raise criticism to the position of poetry, drama, or fiction? The whole tendency of the relationship is degrading, and it is no wonder that one unspeculative native practitioner of twenty years ago assigned to the critic the most neutral function conceivable, that of catalytic agent (as in chemistry) between a book and its reader.

He has since repented himself, but the repentance is less typically American than the emasculating evaluation.

Our utter abasement of criticism blinds us, despite our inventiveness, to its potentialities as an art form. One fact we need to draw from the history of criticism, and then we may safely drop the three volumes of Saintsbury deeper than the plummet may sound: criticism was once the law-giver of the arts, occupying an authoritarian position which contrasts strongly with its present servitude. Repudiated by the arts for its nonsensical tyranny, it sought to regain favor by servile usefulness: it declared it aimed at no higher role than to interpret its great companions to the commonalty. Thus its whole history is one of extreme alteration, with only two aspects, neither of which is creditable to itself. To return criticism to dictatorship is against the genius of our country—that may be the inevitable consequence of a totalitarian formulation of the rules of substance; but to advance it to perfect equality with poetry, fiction, and the drama is a task congenial to our natural impulses and challenging to our creative powers. Its previous eminence, admittedly too exalted, offers assurance that experiment to this end is not frivolous, and our circumstances and our endowment hold out some hope of success.

To harmonize with poetry, fiction, and the drama, to be an art, criticism must take as its first object the delight of the reader, not his information nor his discipline, save as these are incidental to his delight. The critic has precisely the same relations to the reader as has the poet, the novelist, or the dramatist. He must provide an engaging text or he is lost. And towards his substance his attitude cannot be any different from that of his companions. He must be as faithful in his report of it as they: veracity is not qualifiable, nor is there a kind belonging to the poet and another to the critic, despite all that has been written on the subject. No special limitation is imposed on the critic by his material: whatever the novelist or playwright may do with a man, the critic may do with the

quintessence of a man. In fact, there are no primary differences between the functions of poet, novelist, playwright, and critic; there is only a secondary difference: whereas the poet delights by versifying, the novelist by fictionizing, the playwright by dramatizing, the critic delights by judging. Each may usurp the business of the other and lose thereby his special name-tag, but so long as he delights, he remains ever the artist.

These are very elementary observations, but they are emancipating: once the critic has made them, he is ready to leave his ties and ballast behind him and go afoot with his vision. Judgment is no longer a stultifying function, cramping the imaginative mind by the knowledge that a higher *rapport* could never be achieved between a critic and his subject than Hazlitt attained to with his contemporaries a century ago: the new or creative critic sees that judgment may be accomplished by setting his subject in a context which heightens or diminishes it, and his mind takes fire with fashioning that context. Analogy presses upon him from the sister arts: the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt suggests posing the figure against the turpitudes and obliquities of the age, or the admired, ordered mind against the chaos and black night of time. Not merely light and shade, but all the tonal effects of composition are the critic's for utilizing. What might not be accomplished with *intermezzi*, as in a symphony, adorning the central theme! What with contrapuntal effects! Technology also provides patterns unknown to the ancients, and as a high seat in a scout plane enforces the old observation that there is no motion without markers to take it by, so the critic perceives that growth in his subject can best be demonstrated by the deliberate intrusion of secondary figures who are surpassed or not attained to. Dealing with movements, the creative critic need no longer talk of "sources," as if he were a country wizard searching for water with a hazel stick, but the cosmic storm is his natural figure or the star swirl his simile. Feeling all the exhilaration of the creative artist before whom a wholly new vista has been

opened, feeling as Poe must have felt when he realized that the primary rules of the short story were all to be formulated, and formulated by him, the critic turns to the details of constructing masterpieces. He may not accomplish one, but never was the prospect so alluring. If he does, it will be a pattern of delightful inventions, threaded through with his laughter, his content, and his wonderment at his temerity. It might be American.

OBSCURITY AS FETISH

By

WYLIE SYPHER

The terminology of literary criticism serves as a guide to the values intended in the writing of any period. A proper understanding of *mimesis* unriddles the strategy of Greek drama; the *significatio* of mediaeval criticism indicates the allegorical or anagogical interest of William of Lorres or Dante; the appeal to nature is a reflex of 18th century sensitivity to conceptual order; Wordsworth's delight in his own passions and volitions suggests how 19th century verse was generated upon the level of feeling. Each age has its critical jargon. Our own critical jargon is no less revealing: one's reputation as critic is jeopardized if one fails to mention sensibility, tone, tensions, levels and manifolds of intent, ambivalence, and ambiguity. To fail in distinguishing complexity of meaning is to fail in all. And heterogeneity, ambivalence, or ambiguity inevitably mean obscurity or difficulty.

Concerning this obscurity I should like to raise two issues mutually involved—one social, and one critical in the literary sense. Both concern what might be called skill-fetishism, and neither receives due attention in Mr. Henri Peyre's new book, *Writers and their Critics.*

First, as to the broader social issue: a dozen or so years back Mr. Eastman, who has become a classic on the matter, was complaining that literary communication had been reduced to a minimum, to a language of private values. Mr. Eastman naively assumed the position of the simple reader who judges that what he finds unintelligible is therefore inferior. Now Mr. J. Donald Adams has pressed Mr. Eastman's attack to

more vulgar conclusions — berating Joyce upon his contempt for the average intelligence. Mr. Adams and Mr. Eastman resemble persons who look at a painting by Kandinsky and expect to see reproduced what looks familiar. David Daiches has dismissed such criticism by remarking that "sensibility differs in different ages more radically than we are sometimes aware, and an awareness of the nature of contemporary sensibility is indispensable in judging modern literature." By historical circumstance literature, as well as criticism, is serving many and very complex functions—psychological, sociological, political, religious, ethical, and metaphysical. Besides, it is true, as Whitehead says, that neither philosophy nor science has ever been more closely auxiliary to literature than at the moment. Inescapably literature and criticism involve a complexity almost unprecedented, since the modern mind falls into dissociations. We may agree with Gertrude Stein that "the business of writing is the question of living in the contemporariness." Poetry, if it is to "mean" anything, must continue to be the breath and finer spirit of knowledge, the impassioned expression of all science; it must follow wherever it can find atmosphere in which to move its wings. As for the novel, *Finnegan's Wake* is a robust acceptance of our heterogeneity.

Mr. Eastman disregarded the deepest ambiguity in the modern situation—that while we are living in a culture that tends toward mass response, mass compulsions, the poet or novelist finds necessary to his insights a language that is increasingly private. Thus occurs the alienation of the artist from society; the poet or novelist of bourgeois culture, that is. The Soviet writer has solved his dilemma by affirming an official line. I am not going to depreciate following an official line, which may lead to art in any sense of the term. It may happen, ultimately, that under a socialist order the writer will speak acceptably for the masses. If so, his medium will perhaps become less difficult because less private. I do not intend to pursue the issue in this quarter, however, although I suggest

that leftish readers in the United States (and notably New York) seem to be the last to undervalue literary obscurity. I am really concerned here to detect the limit to which can be pressed the Marxist contempt for the bourgeois writer who speaks his private and unintelligible language.

What has been said will imply the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate difficulty in literature. Legitimate difficulty is that complexity, heterogeneity, allusiveness, or obliqueness deriving from the situation in which the writer lives, or from his response to that situation. This sort of complexity or difficulty may assume many forms. It may appear in the extraordinary toughness of Dante's poem whenever he deals with dogmatic issues—the distinction between the primal and the conditioned will in man, for example, or his definition of prudence. Or it may appear in the egregious materialism of Donne's imagery—alchemical or cosmological allusion, and so on. Or it may appear in Miltonic compression of myth—a bold synthesis of reference and image which, nevertheless, derives from tradition. Or it may appear in the form depreciated by current criticism, the emotional upsurge imperfectly but suggestively articulates—Wordsworth's sense sublime of something interfused — a kind of poetic density that Mr. Empson and Mr. Brooks do not much admire. Particularly it may appear in the experimental language of Joyce, the structural distortion of a Faulkner novel, or the conceptual energy of Auden's verse. Randall Jarrell has mentioned the indirection of modern poetry, its emphasis on connotation and perceptual nuance, its external and internal disorganization expressing a disorganized age.

In each of these cases the difficulty is associated not only with "living within the contemporariness" but also with intention. Here semantics can be of aid. The question of intent is basic. This question Mr. Eastman and the simple reader never weigh. They are unwilling to ask more than "Is this what I expected?" Were such criticism heeded, any interpretation of the contemporary situation in terms other than those dictated

by Babbittry would be impossible. Socially, it is not only desirable but urgent to tolerate this sort of difficulty, the difficulty resulting from a genuine effort to interpret. The language in this case may be extraordinarily private. That may be, from the view of the writer, unfortunate; but socially we must cultivate even the most private appraisal of mass behavior. Then too, as the sciences fulfill their complexities, there will be, or ought to be, a progressively diverse interpretation of experience within the concepts of these sciences. C. Day Lewis is justified in his opinion that poetry must increasingly assimilate to itself the sciences of the era.

The other form of obscurity appears unwarranted; and it involves the direction of what John Crowe Ransom has called the new criticism. Here we may wonder whether the Marxist has reason in his evaluation. I refer to the form of obscurity or difficulty that corresponds in economic activity to skill-fetishism. Under the conditions of present-day industrial enterprise, the social value of what is produced is often concealed, to be replaced by commodity-fetishism. Consequently the craftsman assumes a special attitude toward his product. Revolting against mass production, he sets a unique value on his skill. Thus his aversion to commodity-fetishism provokes a skill-fetishism. The product of his skill becomes a mysterious thing, valuable beyond its social utility.

Without enlarging the social implications of the parallel, I should like to examine briefly a curious development within our new criticism of poetry — especially significant because many of our ablest critics like Ransom, Tate, Blackmur, and Empson are themselves poets. At the same moment, criticism is insisting upon the unified response that a poem evokes— synaesthesis, the balance or reconciliation of discords, or what Empson calls the fusion by un-namable "forces" — and also upon vehicle, texture, and multiple definition, or, as Jarrell writes, "emphasis on details, on the part rather than on the whole." I do not wish to disparage the rigorous and enlighten-

ing criticism of Richards, Empson, Brooks, or Ransom, for example, with their concern for the nuance. Mr. Peyre to the contrary, these critics offer far more than *explication de textes* and pompous logic. Yet undeniably, though without intent, their effect has been to establish the autonomy of local meaning, to debauch the poem into clusters of interpretations tangential to the poem itself, if not at times irrelevant. The poem has become a succession of minor densities — a stress necessary to correct the 19th century emptiness, poetic "effect," and intellectual triviality.

However he may differ from other new critics, Mr. Ransom more directly than they arrives at an impasse resulting from scrutiny that disintegrates a poem. He is betrayed into an extreme position, which his own words indicate. Having proposed that the "cognitive" substance is the structure of poetry, he remarks that "the poem develops its local particularities while it progresses towards its functional completion." The imagination of the reader "works with the presented texture of a poem; with its heterogeneity always, with its ambiguity if it must. Heterogeneity is the specific, the characteristic mode of poetry." The texture of a poem, he says — the energetic and irrelevant excursions into particularity that relate the poem to the density and contingency of the actual world and spread out in planes and at right angles from the structure of the poem—creates the poetic dimension. Texture is poetic discourse itself. Then we come upon Ransom's surprising but necessary corrective: "We are expected," he says, "to have sufficient judgment not to let this local character take us too far or keep us too long from the argument." In other words, a poem must not be too poetical! Empson, following the tack of Richards, attempts to forestall the same difficulty by insisting at the very close of the *Seven Types* that subsidiary meanings must be relevant. Similarly, R. P. Blackmur concludes that only imaginative apprehension, not excursions into multiple definitions, can admit us to the meaning of a poem. Without wishing to suppress local autonomies,

one must conceive the poem as beyond these autonomies; nor must connotation be irresponsible.

The hot quest of heterogeneous and indeterminate meanings has raised again the Aristotelian issue of the relation between poetry and history. The most heterogeneous and indeterminate meanings of all lie in the contingencies of history. The approach to the textures of living itself, its immediacy, its density, its non-structural increments of meaning, involves the question how poetry is a higher thing than the densest of all transcriptions—experience precipitated into record, *ta kathekaston* instead of *ta katholou.* No doubt Mr. Ransom and Mr. Empson are themselves entirely clear about the distinction between the texture of poetry and the texture of history; but from one view history is all texture. A recent critique of a poem of Empson's asserts "You could read the poem twenty times and not know what it meant! You could read it so many ways!" So can you the chronicle of the Puritans and Charles I. Besides, there is the uncertainty whether according to such standards *Finnegan's Wake* is not the richest texture in modern writing, and consequently one of the most astonishing poems, with every "daring exercise of new grammatical possibilities." To what degree ought the novel, instead of poetry, be devoted to texture? The question is not so rash as it seems.

Then too there is the associated question of irony, one of the most pondered in the new criticism. Ambiguity is admittedly an ironical device. But irony is not really a consequence of indeterminate meanings. A minor sort of irony, approaching cynicism, may be. Grave irony—major ironic effect—demands commitments to belief that the modern poet is seldom prepared to make. The irony of history is a minor irony; it arises from the indeterminate course of events so inscrutable that they approximate chance—*tyche* rather than *dike.* The irony of Aeschylus is not the irony of Euripides, who approaches cynicism. Aeschylus could make commitments that neither Euripides nor Shakespeare could make. Many

ironic effects in modern verse resemble the ironies of history, with the ambiguity of uncertainty, if not of scepticism. They are restricted ironies, the ones available in the twilight of our obscurities.

A final question is whether so forced an accent upon heterogeneity of meanings in poetry is not going to provoke a neo-romantic criticism that reverts to the simple, sensuous, and passionate, a unity of poetry through feeling. Coleridge himself, as Richards has intimated, offers precisely the warrant for such neo-romantic criticism. If present criticism derives from Coleridge's appreciation of oppositions and discords, a neo-romantic criticism might well derive from his appreciation of the esemplastic and secondary imagination—a criticism devoted to poetry carried alive into the heart by passion, whose evocations are not individual and local but general and operative.

Such a poetry would be a counter-measure against obscurities that attend local irrelevancies — irrelevancies that have assumed fetishistic values.

I have tried to suggest that quite aside from Marxist criticism there may be fallacies in the new critical methods. A Marxist might go beyond to accuse the new criticism of exploiting the difficulty of contemporary writing until it nourishes the coterie. For example, a poem was lately recommended as "fascinatingly difficult." The coterie is nothing new. It only happens that the difficulty of certain modern writing seems determined not by the complexity of the modern situation or even the private insight of the writer so much as by a fetish of ambiguity. One reads that a poem by Empson "exercised many hours of drawing-room discussion in Cambridge, and withheld its ultimate ambiguous secrets for years."

There are historical parallels to this sort of fetishism, and a Marxist would find them pertinent as a token of the alienation of the artist. Hence a paradox: in proportion as

the modern writer is difficult, he is apt to reflect the existing situation; in proportion, however, as he is devoted to ambiguities as such, he earns a brand of contempt, socially. After all, he is repeating the performance of the 19th century poets whom he despises. The 19th century made a fetish of feeling: Wordsworth, Ruskin, even so acute a mind as Arnold, assumed that the substance of poetry and all the arts is feeling. Who, ah who, can make us feel? The poet. And who is *now* the poet? He who can withhold ultimate ambiguous secrets for years.

There comes a point at which the Empsonian appreciation of ambiguity must produce a heterogeneity and indeterminateness of meaning largely external—a poetic dimension that is almost verbal. In such poetry there is the extremest autonomy of texture. About 280 B.C. Lycophron of Calchis began his poem *Alexandra* thus: "Dawn was just soaring over the steep crag of Phegion on swift Pegasean wings, leaving in his bed by Cerne, Tithonus, thy brother by another mother . . . and the centipede fair-faced stork-hued daughters of Phalacra smote maiden-slaying Thetis with their blades, over Calydnae showing their stern posts like white wings . . . when Alexandra opened her inspired Bacchic lips on the high Hill of Doom that was founded by the wandering cow." Here are verses that might withhold ultimate ambiguous secrets for years—and they mark a genuine alienation of the poet.

Thomas Gray with his scattering antiquarian notes on his Norse odes belongs, I fear, in the same rank of obscurity. Mr. Eliot appended similar notes to his earlier poems. Assuredly he felt the strange disease of modern life with its sick, divided aims; the obscurities in those poems are in Eliot's vision itself. But the hinting notes that only half-inform must raise the ugly doubt of preciosity. Contrast them with the discursive, taxing notes of Auden's *Double Man.*

In any case, to expect that a poet or novelist or critic can live contemporaneously with Einstein, Freud, Picasso, Lenin,

Honegger, Sorokin, Maritain, or Gilson and not be responsive to discords is to condemn poetry and fiction to sterility, if not cowardice. Complexities and obscurities are as unavoidable as they are legitimate. One cannot help wishing, however, that Mr. Empson had not written so irresistibly of seven types of ambiguity.

THE MEANING OF THE "NEW CRITICISM"

By
WALTER J. ONG, S. J.

In that [the Italian], as well as in every other language, the easiest books are generally the best; for whatever author is obscure and difficult in his own language, certainly does not think clearly. This is, in my opinion, the case of a celebrated Italian author, to whom the Italians, from the admiration they have of him, have given the epithet of *Il divino*: I mean Dante. Though I formerly knew Italian extremely well, I could never understand him: for which reason I had done with him.—*Letter of Lord Chesterfield to his son.*

Between the First World War and the present time, someone has been tampering with the springs of Helicon. Hippocrene and Aganippe are scarcely considered so limpid as they were once reputed to be. A new criticism has brought tools to probe well below the surface and has disclosed toad skins, fenny snakes, blind worm's stings, and swirls of sediment enough to discredit beyond recovery the opinion that the springs of poetry in their depths run entirely clear. All this has puzzled or even troubled a good many persons who have wondered from a distance what the engineers in charge of the recent investigations have been about. This much is certainly true: Messrs. I. A. Richards, F. R. Leavis, William Empson, and the rest of the group active for the past two decades or so at the University of Cambridge, with Mr. T. S. Eliot as an invaluable semi-professional consultant, have undoubtedly evolved a criticism as genuinely new as such things can well be and have demanded some radical revisions of common views of poetry. It matters little that the metaphysician has ignored these common views together with most of the customary trappings with which criticism had for some time been hung. The wholesale sloughing of large sections of

a quite basic outlook, however gradually and quietly accumulated, is likely to be of concern to him.

The present paper is an attempt to answer some of the questions concerning the new criticism which the metaphysician might raise.

Although Mr. Eliot, somewhat differently situated than Mr. Richards, is of equal importance, Richards is recognized as the central figure around whom most of the "new criticism" revolves. He takes his own philosophical bearings more closely and turns more frequently and decisively to philosophical speculation than the others of the school. The position which he occupies is undoubtedly due in large part to his astuteness as a reader, his ability as a teacher to inspire others, and his mastery of a prose style built upon the English language and its idiom and metaphor. And in his role of philosopher this last in particular is important, for it gives Richards' philosophical excursions, which have become more and more lengthy and worth while, a life and urgency long absent from a more artificial tradition. But Richards' special appeal — and his appeal is admitted even by those who profess an initial dislike for his work[1]—is his knack for asking and answering the pertinent questions, the questions which at this time seem particularly important. Such a knack is a matter of the philosophical milieu into which one is born and of one's own special background of interests within that milieu. With the philosophical milieu, then, as it manifested itself some years ago in criticism and poetical theory, and with the general place of the new criticism in that milieu, we can begin.

LITERARY CARTESIANISM

Not only philosophy, but the study of poetry and all literature has had its Cartesianism too. The coloring of the first modern philosopher's thought is visible in almost every current flowing into our century from the early eighteenth, when the Cartesian dichotomy, having poisoned the sources of thought "in the high bogs of the mountains," was running into all the

valleys below and seeping by little and little into the entire land. To filter out the suppositions which the dichotomy has introduced everywhere is a long and tedious process and not always successful. Many of us still have penance to do for viewing St. Thomas through glasses steeped in the Cartesian dye.

The starting within (however we got there) and working out, with the consequent disjunction of "mind" and "matter," led inevitably to a treatment of "ideas" which was to have its effect on poetical theory and literary criticism, and all the more so because of the quite human weakness for the over-simplification which Descartes proposed. Often before, the idea, and not *being* itself, had taken the measure of knowledge, only now it was to enjoy its most phenomenal success of all time, first as part of a method soon destroyed by Locke and then as persisting in its implications even among its destroyers.[2] And poetical theory, never very strong philosophically, deriving in great part from medieval logicism and in part more directly from the Cicero-Quintilian grammatical confusion, was quite ready to soak up whatever Cartesianism it could.

There is a general suspicion abroad that the rhetoric and literary criticism in the schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was dry to the point of being dusty, and a cursory examination of the classroom texts confirms the suspicion. Matters were rather distressingly obvious, and somehow distressingly wrung with logic. Much of this can be traced to the all-pervading influence of the Cartesian idea, which we must remember was sired in mathematical unfeeling. Blair, for instance, the dean of the late rhetorical tradition, gives us some evidence:

> Simple expression just makes our idea known to others; but figurative language, over and above, bestows a particular dress upon that idea; a dress, which both makes it to be remarked, and adorns it.[3]

The loose connection with the idea which the "dress" implies exists as a function of the mind-body relationship of Descartes. Blair in general adopts what we may call a moderate position:

figures are not unnatural, they express something. But there is no close inter-action between them and ideas. They are dress. Similarly, an American author, who tells us in his preface that he follows Blair, Whately, Beattie, Campbell, and Watts, writes in an 1846 textbook:

> *Q.* What do you understand by poetry?
> *A.* Lively and striking combinations of thought, expressed in language arranged, for the sake of harmony, according to certain rules.[4]

Here again the dichotomy asserts itself: thought combines not with language but with thought; language has its own rules.

I do not propose to make these writers ridiculous. Blair held a highly respected position and read his lectures for twenty-four years in the University of Edinburgh. His influence persisted pretty directly for over a hundred years after the publication of the *Lectures* in 1783, and the book remains useful in many respects. But critical writing in this tradition appears singularly incompetent to come to grips with any other than the abstract meaning of the poem. In a passage which will be recognized as typical, commenting on King's exquisite "Exequy on the Death of a Beloved Wife," Boyd has such things as this to say:

> What a *"last* good night" is this! and oh! what a *one* "good morrow!" to last for eternity, when such partners awake from the same bed, in the resurrection of the just! Is there the "man born of a woman," who has loved a woman, and lost whom he loved, and lamented whom he has lost, that will not feel in the depth of his spirit all the tenderness and truth of these old-fashioned couplets! I dare not offer a comment upon them, lest I should disturb the sanctity of repose which they are calculated to inspire![5]

Faced with the complexity of organization in the poem, the commentator throws up his hands. Instead of explaining the poem, he tries registering an emotional reaction, rather less successfully than the poem itself does.

This kind of comment is not universal, but it is the staple of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century criticism. When discus-

sion of poetry rises above this in this period, it does so by shifting its attention elsewhere, not by any minute account of poetic organization. Works which have gained reputations for themselves, such as Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* and Wordsworth's preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* or Shelley's *Defense,* have little value as explanations of poems. For the Cartesian mentality prevails: although the doctrine may be whispered and sometimes only supposed, the absolute and ultimate referent of meaning is the idea, not being. Poetry is strung down from ideas, and emotion and sense-knowledge, admittedly present in the poem, come in somewhat surreptitiously, being inexplicable under the terms in which the ideas are analyzed. To speak of these other things as integral to the organization of the ideas themselves would be profanation of the intellect and perversion of language.

THE ROLE OF MATTER IN THE CONCEPT

The critics' success—for the better commentators must have met with success—came because the audience stood on the same ground as they did. This was the age of ideas, clarity, and definition; it would have thought strangely of Thomas Aquinas' persistent and calculated use of judgments, such as *quod quid erat esse* (the what it is to be—the imperfect *erat* stands for an aorist sense in Aristotle's Greek) in place of a simple term. In the reduction of the judgment to a mathematical equation, the very heart had been taken out of any understanding of the eduction of the intelligible from matter. Such an understanding does not depend merely on recognition of the fact that concepts are associated with phantasms. The understanding is defective if it does not observe that, however they may be handled in mathematics and minor logic, the most abstract abstractions always come to us in ways which reflect their origins out of material existents. They are not things hung together on pieces of string, but things found in judgments, the predicate of which always comes as form (more abstract) to its subject as matter (more concrete). Abstractions

cannot be preserved and packaged, but are known and used only as they are being drawn in some way or other out of matter.[6]

There is a tempting simplicity in dealing with things the Cartesian or idealistic way, where a thing is simply its definition,[7] because of the intellectual clarity and manageability thereby had and because of the easy distinctions we can make between our "ideas" considered as dependent upon definition. But this tempting clarity and distinctness are not goals to be achieved equally by all concepts, nor for that matter by all judgments, if we regard the real origins of these things. Clarity and distinctness are variable as between concepts and with reference to any one concept, growing less as we keep closer to matter and increasing as we move away. For prime matter, which forms the basis of distinction between material things, is the principle of unintelligibility and hinders intellectual clarity and distinctness. (It is precisely the distinction, based on matter, between this individual and that individual of a species which I have difficulty in grasping intellectually and for which I fall back on the senses.) Conjunction with and separation from matter come about variously, but always in so far as there is conjunction, there is some confusion and indistinctness between concepts, some intellectual unmanageability, and in so far as there is separation, there is distinctness and clarity. Moreover, since *entia rationis* originate with material things, although we can consider other points about them than their persistent material reference, to consider *entia rationis* entirely and adequately, we must remember their connections with matter and their consequent varying in clarity and distinctness. We must remember, for example, that the concept of man had by an adult differs from that had by the same person when he was a child as by greater experience it is in various ways freed from the matter of the existents from which it originates. Likewise, two concepts of species in different genera are more clear and distinct than concepts of the two genera themselves because genus is achieved by generalizing abstraction, which

regards the concept and ultimately the thing in function not of its formal or unifying principle but rather of its material or diversifying principle—the principle which looks to what reference the thing has to that which is unlike it. In this way my concepts of rational animal and of the American elm are more clear and distinct from one another than my concepts of animal and plant. Moreover, a concept of a chimpanzee can be further developed or perfected than that, let us say, of a yeast plant, because the anthropoid apes are higher in the hierarchy of being and thus less submerged in matter. Concepts, therefore, may be undeveloped and indistinct or developed and clear, or they may be generic and indistinct or specific and clear, and they may represent things more or less knowable in themselves and thus be capable of attaining more or less clarity and distinctness. In all this their various relations with matter are in evidence.

But our concepts have far more traffic with matter than this. Not only are they used in judgments, which reflect inevitably in their structure the origin of our knowledge in things made up of matter and form, and not only are the concepts in such judgments variously related in themselves to matter, but a further special relation with matter is set up artificially by the use of the spoken word. A large number of our abstractions are made and much of our knowledge is achieved under the guidance of speech. But concepts are not carried *on* words. They are submerged in the matter of words and must be reabstracted from them, reclaimed from this new matter. The study of the use of words, of communication or symbolism or semantics, involves *the study of an abstractive process.*

INDUCTION AND THE ULTIMATE DETERMINATION OF MEANING

The Cartesian-Kantian dualism had obscured the fact that concepts and judgments cannot be prepared in one mind and handed like tokens to another. In their movement from intellect to intellect, they must pass through matter *en route*: the vehicle which bears from intellect to intellect the judgment

compounded of logical matter and form is itself a material thing and, being such, can present any meaning, any signification, which it may have only as something to be abstracted from it. Definition cannot relieve us of this necessity, for ultimately the communicative value of any utterance is derived not from definition but from induction. I can push the inductive process back, as I might do by defining photosynthesis as the "formation of carbohydrates in the chlorophyll-containing tissues of plants exposed to light," and each of the resulting definition components can be again defined, and each of the resulting components again. At any point, however, I may find it practicable to break off this process and substitute one of pointing, and at some time or other I must do so. For instance, I might show a series of plants in sufficient quantity for you to know what the word "plant" in my definition meant by your performing some sort of induction. I could even have substituted for the definition in the first place by showing the process of photosynthesis—not, it is true, an easy thing to do. Definition is often, as here, the simplest way to exhibit the meaning of a word, but definition must stop somewhere and means nothing at all unless it does stop. Somewhere or other, in establishing the meaning of my terms, I must simply point and say that "this and this and this and this" or "what you see here and here and here and here" is what this word means. And it is only in terms of such pointing that every word in a definition has its significance and that definition is possible at all.

Because of the increased complexity of connections, this process of abstracting meaning from words is much more involved and devious than other abstraction. We may form the concept of a man directly by abstracting from beings with which we come in contact. But we attach meaning to words by dropping out successively parts of contexts in which the words occur. Let us suppose ourselves learning the meaning of the word "man" for the first time by the inductive process on which all meaning depends. Hearing the sound, supposing

that we realize the speaker's intention to use it significatively, we will know in the first instance that it refers to something in the context, taking this as the whole set of things to which we can at that time be attentive. The next time the word is repeated, the context has changed in great part, and in our seeking after meaning we can eliminate whatever does not recur in the second context. Man will be included always in what possibilities for meaning remain, but so will many other meanings. There will be a time, perhaps, when we will know from an accumulation of contexts that the word includes in its designation a man, without being sure that it does not designate a clothed man or a tall man, as "boor" designates a man who behaves in certain ways. It will be only after a long succession of separate contexts that we know the more limited meaning of the term. Here is a movement from the less determined to the more determined, but the movement does not follow the way of abstractions which are had from things and not from words. In dealing with words I am moving from the less determined to the more determined by freeing my concept from a set of material things with which it is surrounded quite haphazardly. These haphazard surroundings cling to the word and are only gradually eliminated.[8] They can only be recognized as irrelevant to the meaning by the fact that they sometimes do not occur when the word is used; for definition is not ultimate, induction is our last resource, and therefore, ultimately, I cannot *tell* you which things are irrelevant. If, after the meaning of a word is more or less fixed, certain elements of the context tend to recur with the word, the meaning of the word will inevitably shift, for these are our clues, and we must follow them.

Moreover, since apart from their significative connections words have existences of their own, the relations of the sounds of words among themselves and with other things enter into the context as determinants of meaning. This is especially true when we are dealing with words which signify other than physical objects and which must therefore receive their deter-

mination by complex indirect ways of pointing. Thus "flimmer," independently of its use as a word, is associated in sound with "shimmer," "glimmer," "slimmer," "dimmer," "flimsy," "swim," "skim," and the whole *fl*-group of "fluid," "flow," and so on.[9] Consequently, if we use the word "flimmer" in a sense like "flicker," we will find ourselves unable to hold it to the exact meaning of "flicker" because the "shimmer-glimmer-slimmer" group of words, forming always a part of the context, will exert their pull. "Flimmer" will always point to them, and "flicker" to "flick," "nick," "quick," "prick," "tick," and so on. And because meaning has developed for us from a less to a more determinate thing and there is no particular place for it to stop, as long as there are clues for determining meaning further, we will follow them.

Since words thus form parts of contexts for one another, they hold their meanings to a certain extent by a kind of balance of power. The introduction of new words will disturb this balance and cause a shift in the signification of all related words. If the word "flimmer," for instance, began to be used to any great extent, the meaning of "flimsy" would undoubtedly shift somewhat. The kind of tyranny exercised over our intellectual life by these connections is extreme. Certain concepts simply cannot be expressed, as we know, in one language or another: every word or group of words we select is pulled out of line by uncontrollable parts of the context. Moreover, many if not most of our concepts are developed under the discipline of the material parts of words, because we often form or perfect concepts as words call for them, with the result that we tend even to order concepts among themselves according to the whimsicalities of the words with which they are associated.

I am aware how shocking this is to the dictionary mentality, which, growing up with the dictionary itself after the Cartesian success, regards meaning as cohering to words by definition, whereas more often it coheres by a more or less direct pointing process. The dictionary mentality leads to the

butchery sometimes done in the name of denotation and connotation. For example, "flimmer," being defined by the dictionary as "to glimmer; flicker,"[10] must, to this sort of mind, signify directly (denote) these things or, at best, a generic meaning which they share, and must signify anything else indirectly (by connotation). If, on the other hand, we allow signification to rise more directly from the senses, "flimmer" does not mean directly either "glimmer" or "flicker," and, though it means something like both, its meaning is far more specific than what generic meaning they may share. But for the Cartesian mind, again, this traffic with the senses would be betrayal of the intellect.

All this is not to deny that by a special effort we can, of course, handle words as strictly symbolic for purposes of abstract thinking, although the amount of effort necessary and the notable failure of many attempts at this use of language should not be minimized. Fixed by firm convention and shored up by the long series of definitions which are the first supports of any scientific discussion, this language is as determined, as invariable, as high in formal and as low in material content as it is possible to make it—so much so that we can afford to disregard its material content and study the workings of concepts and judgments by the logic of demonstration. But even this language exists ultimately in terms of pointing and is notably more manageable in the physical and mathematical sciences, where the pointing can be carried off easily, than in philosophy, where it must be far more skillfully managed.

Moreover, the very abstract meanings of words have their own way of entering into other relationships with material existents through their connections with the person uttering them. Thus, the fact that under certain circumstances I express certain things is itself pregnant with meaning dependent upon the abstract—as well as other—signification of what I give utterance to. Here again the concept becomes less intelligible, less clear and distinct in meaning as it is submerged in the material existents surrounding it. Its meaning in this way holds

itself in terms of these existents and this meaning to become intelligible must be abstracted again. Thus the fact that I remark about the coldness of the weather may mean in its whole material context that I am anaemic or hypersensitive or a meteorologist or interested in garden produce or nervous about something to say. The abstract sense of my statement about the weather becomes ambiguous, that is, loses in intelligibility as it is pushed down into the material context, though a new meaning of the whole is abstracted. In this way dramatic situation enters poetry.

Some words are used only for such communication as this and consequently retain an indetermination and lack of intellectual clarity in themselves. Interjections, for instance, such as "Well!" or "Indeed!" are not used in themselves for an abstraction, but are rather imbedded in a whole set of material circumstances so that, if you will, you may make an abstraction from the whole set and conclude by this abstraction that the man who utters them is shocked or delighted or surprised or agrees with you or thoroughly disagrees with you, as the case may be. And as words other than expletives are used more or less for expletive purposes, they partake more or less of this function.

THE LOGIC OF POETRY

Now because concepts exhibit these various connections with matter in the intimate ways we have observed, poetry is possible. The unity of a poem, which comes home to us at least from time to time as we read poetry, is not explainable in terms of the organization of the "ideas" in their own right. Such a unity as we know in reading a poem would, if it were strictly ideological, require the strong (necessary) connections of the logic of demonstration, for in terms of this logic abstractions find their organization. The logic of rhetoric is more slippery, less unified: the rhetorical syllogism is an enthymeme, a syllogism which argues from probability and does not come to an absolutely certain conclusion, but to one con-

clusion where another or others are possible. The enthymeme has its unification in being ordered to the unity of a concretely realized act rather than in a strictly, logical structure. The logic of poetry is still more sliding, for the concepts here are merely juxtaposed, united as St. Thomas says by our supposing (*existimatio*).[11] We have not in poetry even the justification of the historian for uniting concepts. The historian lacks logical necessity but has contingent actuality on his side: Washington *need* not have been president, but he was. In poetry we have a very weak analogue of logic and no contingent actuality at all, for it makes no difference in our poem whether the man we call president existed or not. How, therefore, are we justified in setting down a judgment, let alone in setting down several judgments and expecting them to cohere? And if the abstractions in a poem do cohere—and we know they do because we have direct experience of a poem's unity—how do they? The answer, of course, is that the poem holds abstractions in its unity through their connections—intimate, as we have seen, and manifold—with the more material elements which enter into it. Ultimately, as the logic of rhetoric is unified by being resolved into an action, the logic of poetry is unified in a particular act of contemplation, an act peculiar to man and involving, in unusually close cooperation, the interplay of the sensory and the intellectual that is necessary for the kind of knowledge which must be had by a being dealing with the intelligible existing in matter.

Throughout all the steps in communication traced here we must remember the importance of the imagination as the internal sense giving the highest organization on the sensory level to the perceptions with which our awareness of things begins. Every time the intelligible is brought forth from matter in any way at all, the imagination plays its part not merely as accompanying the concept but as forming the direct material out of which the concept is drawn. In its reproduction of the outside world, it shares in its own way this world's ambiguity and unintelligibility, but serves also as a point at which, on an

infra-intellectual level, the conceptual can be made into a kind of unity. Hence its importance in the poetic economy.

But neither this notion of the imagination nor any of the other notions involving the interplay of the material and the intelligible can be assimilated to the Cartesian intelligence whose suppositions—perpetuated by the devotion of the nineteenth century criticism to Platonism—have entered so deeply into the thought of the past two centuries.[12] Only for him who sees the emergence of the intelligible out of material being, who realizes that the principle *nihil in intellectu quod non prius aliquomodo in sensibus* is to be understood *simpliciter et non secundum quid,* that the *nihil* means *nihil,* that the abstract concepts which words represent, and the knowledge that words do represent the concepts, and the very connections of the strictest logical sort are first, in some way or other, derived via the senses from material things and maintain always some commerce with the material—only for him who realizes this when he embarks on poetical criticism, can poetry be other than either an inexplicable movement of matter or an exercise in dry logic. Richards and his generation were born into a world where a large residue of Cartesianism had blocked the approach to poetry which such a realization would have made possible. But the residue was being eaten away. Like all partial representations of reality which propose themselves as complete, it wore poorly in contact with full-bodied being. For this contact it was not prepared. Aspects of things not manageable by the old dichotomy or the occasionalism and materialism and idealism to which it gave rise were beginning to assert themselves. One of these was the problem of poetic organization. The particular pertinency of the inquiries of Richards and his colleagues comes from the fact that they took up the question of "meaning" but turned their investigations toward the neglected material side under the discipline of the now successful laboratory psychologies at a time when the Cartesian breakdown enabled them to flirt with the possibility

of there being more to reality than materialism would allow—or at least to act as though there might be.

REORIENTATION UNDER THE "NEW CRITICISM"

Since dualism had hoisted the idealistic balloon well out of sight and mind, it was necessary to start from the ground again. Because the problems of poetic organization, as we have seen, are concerned to a large extent with infra-intellectual activities, the neurologist's acquaintance with the sense life provides a starting point for a solid analysis of poetry. Neurology and allied psychological sciences were paramount among Richards' early interests, and at the very time when his appeal was growing among one group of readers, his concern with "attitudes" and "impulses" was annoying those who recalled the material polarity, the brashness, and the vagaries of the laboratory psychologies. Richards has since moved far from the neurological substitute for metaphysics. As Mr. Ransom has remarked, he is "essentially, or ultimately, an honest reporter," and "honest nominalist-positivists in the course of their careers will come to have more commerce with the metaphysics than they had contemplated."[13] Because the new criticism grew out of the laboratory, it could consider problems of poetical unity, and it was not long before the investigators following these problems, where connections between the material and abstract are so much in evidence, found themselves outflanking the assumptions of the materialist and idealist. Thus Richards appeals in 1929 for "a closer contact with reality, either directly, through experience of actual things, or mediately through other minds which are in closer contact," and in 1935 he offers his book in the dedication "for help in preferring the actual to the abstract."[14] Richards owes much to his persistent interest in Coleridge's theories of the imagination, and his two latest books[15] give the strongest confirmation to those who have long believed they discerned in his thought the direct vision necessary to the metaphysician.

As the "new criticism" took over the direction of affairs,

the subjects made to bear the weight of its investigations were such things as metaphor, "meaning" in its largest sense and various manifestations, meter considered not as a mathematical abstraction but as a nervous stimulant, ambiguity in poetry, and the behavior of words in conversational usage—with questions of imagery running through all these things. These subjects lie on the borderline between sensory apprehension and intellection, and thus, although its separate parts have other aspects, in its new respect for the organization of poetry in terms of "total meaning"—that is, in terms of its total communication, sensory and intellectual, regarded as a unit—the new criticism differs from what had gone before and becomes a single movement. Changes in the critical evaluation of existing authors and in particular the eclipse of Milton and his "architectural" style and of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romantics, as well as the recovery of "metaphysical" poetry, can, it seems to me, be related to these interests of the new criticism, as can much of Eliot's critical theory.

All the critical parings scattered about by the new thought yield in point of practical importance to Richards' "four kinds of meaning," which have through various text books become quite common property, and which pretty well include many of the other subjects of the new investigations. The "four kinds of meanings" are (1) sense or abstract meaning, (2) feeling or the attitude of the speaker toward his material, (3) tone or the attitude of the speaker toward his audience, and (4) intention or aim, conscious or unconscious.[16] In the second and third, and to some extent in the fourth of these meanings, Richards is dealing directly with the infra-intellectual components of words. The four meanings or functions, as their discoverer sometimes designates them, are important because they include the total meaning[17] of discourse (sensory or concrete and intellectual meanings taken together), grouping the concrete handily around two referents and giving a special place to the speaker's intention or ultimate purpose. Having placed under "sense" the function of words in communicating

abstract meaning, Richards considers in Functions 2 and 3 the direct or non-abstractive communications of language, grouping under "feeling" the "whole conative-affective aspect of life —emotions, emotional attitudes, the will, desire, pleasure-unpleasure and the rest" as these things are conveyed when they are not the subject of the abstract meaning of the discourse Similarly, under "tone" he considers the speaker's or writer's "sense of how he stands toward those he is addressing." In either tone or feeling, abstract meaning may play an indirect part as a component in the whole context which effects the communication, but in considering tone or feeling we hold in our direct view the discourse as a whole—as affording not only words from which conventionally established abstractions may be made, but a complex texture or "total meaning" from which, together with these conventional abstractions other abstractions as well as various sense knowledges may be had.

Taken in themselves, feeling and tone, under one name or another, form a part of the field of almost any criticism. Richards' functions are new only in presenting themselves not as satellites of a system of abstractions projected from the mind, but as integral parts of a system of communication of which one aspect is abstract knowledge. Because he recognizes abstract meaning itself as imbedded in the matter of discourse and especially of non-scientific discourse, he provides for the understanding of poetic organization which makes the new criticism.

TOTAL MEANING AND THE FUNCTIONAL CHARACTER OF POETIC ELEMENTS

In terms of total meaning imagery, dramatic situation, and meter becomes mechanisms of organization — not ornaments, but a part of the complexity out of which the knowledge of a poem grows and in which its simple sense exists. The new criticism rightly regards these things as functional, refusing, for example, to consider seriously meter as a mathematical abstraction because when it is so considered, its value

as a unifying agent is unpredictable apart from an individual context.[18]

Metaphor, understood in the sense of the early rhetoricians as the transfer (*μεταφορά*, *translatio*) of a word from one meaning to another, holds a preeminent place in the new criticism because of its importance as a kind of concentration point at which abstract meaning and sensory apprehension receive a plenary organization. In metaphor, one word is to do the duty of two: at first one abstraction is made, and then, this one being referred again to the context, another meaning is drawn forth. In the process of the second abstraction, all sorts of gymnastics may be resorted to: the transference of meaning is to be made from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species, or on the basis of any analogy,[19] and we must cast about to see which of these things must be done. Discussing metaphor with reference to Shakespeare's Sonnet LXXIII, which begins

> That time of year thou may'st in me behold
> When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang
> Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
> Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang,

Empson does some casting about, enumerating some of the ways in which the boughs may be choirs (I paraphrase):

> Ruined monastery choirs:
> are places in which to sing;
> involve sitting in a row;
> are made of wood, carved into knots, etc.;
> used to be surrounded by a sheltering building,
> whose clustering columns and vaulted arches
> suggest forest trees;
> are now abandoned by all but the grey walls colored
> like the skies of winter,
> etc.[20]

These are some possibilities for connections, although how far they must be rationalized is going to vary. As Mr. Ransom remarks, the poem here manages "to come off faster" than

rummaging through these meanings would allow. And yet we can hardly say that these meanings are not present in the whole. It is evident that in accepting a metaphor such as this, we deal through the imagination with meaning in the concrete, with total meaning in which these abstract meanings are contained. Metaphorical meaning is more tied to the material than meanings which are conventionally determined; it is fixed by a close dependence upon context, for if it becomes permanently attached to a word, we no longer have metaphor. Thus the metaphor lays stress upon the relation of the sensory and the intellectual. This explains its poetic importance as well as Richards' insistence on the interaction of "tenor" (new meaning) and "vehicle" (the meaning on which the new meaning is conveyed) as being the thing desired by the poet rather than the simple conveyance of the tenor itself.[21]

The question of ambiguity and its relation to the new criticism arises here with metaphor, and again, it seems to me, the key to the understanding of the relation is the new criticism's emphasis on total meaning. Ambiguity is on a par with metaphor in the critical literature. Empson has written on seven types of ambiguity in a book by that title which curiously dramatizes his subject by having no table of contents, no chapter headings, no running heads, and no index. Mr. Empson apparently had something to say, went through with it, and stopped. But what he said has been important, and it comes from a consideration of total meaning, where one finds the submergence in matter which alone makes ambiguity possible.

> People are accustomed to judge automatically the forces that hold together a variety of ideas; they feel they know about the forces, if they have analyzed the ideas; many forces, indeed, are covertly included within ideas; and so of the two elements, each of which defines the other, it is much easier to find words for the ideas than for the forces. . . . I wish only, then, to say here that such vaguely imagined "forces" are essential to the totality of a poem, and that they cannot be discussed in terms of ambiguity, because they are complementary to it. But by discussing ambiguity, a great deal may be made clear about them.[22]

The forces are indeed complementary to ambiguity, for they are unifying forces, and ambiguity itself is not. But ambiguity, an evil in strict logical discourse, may serve a purpose in a poem, where, unified variously and accidentally, two concepts may serve better if communicated by one word. Such communication wrecks the machinery of demonstrative logic, which proceeds by necessity and, being abstract, must hold its judgments as all judgments are held by man, one at a time; but the same kind of communication may render real service within the economy of poetry. Here, too, we can hold abstract judgments only singly, but because we regard matter so closely, other judgments are never far away and we are often moving from one to another with great rapidity. We are close to the potency, the multiplicity of matter: our judgments are ready to give way to one another quite readily. Now the choirs (boughs) are places where singing goes on, now they are things once sheltered by churches (trees). Or, more likely, we are satisfied with a more or less sensory knowledge of the resemblance from which any one of many meanings or all successively may be drawn. Thus the interest in metaphor and ambiguity, as well as in imagery, which is so closely concerned in all movements from matter, is once again interest in total meaning: meaning as related to specific material contexts.

This interest in total meaning finds expression in statements such as Mr. MacLeish's

> A poem should not mean
> But be,[23]

which are endlessly multiplied and amplified in writings influenced by the new criticism. Such statements show an awareness in some form or other of the connections of the poem with matter—these sounds, these resemblances—which are so essential that to abstract is to destroy. Thus Empson says, "You must rely on each particular poem to show you the way in which it is trying to be good; if it fails you cannot know its object."[24]

THE "NEW CRITICISM" AND "METAPHYSICAL" POETRY

At this point the connection becomes apparent between the new criticism, Eliot's critical theories, and the interest in "metaphysical" poetry which has grown up with the new criticism and found in Eliot its most expressive champion. The poetry of wit, called "metaphysical" perhaps not so ineptly as we are sometimes led to believe, is poetry which Eliot says "involves, probably, a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible."[25] This is the poetry of many-sided meanings, the poetry which manipulates language so as to utilize to the greatest possible extent the total meaning of words. It gives full play to the connections between our concepts deriving from the material of words so that its interest in words is not mere virtuosity but something sincere and rather scientific. The metaphysical conceit, a comparison instituted between disparities, is a comparison which resists strict logical organization. It is given its organization within the total meaning of the poem. That is to say, metaphysical poetry in cultivating strange conceits is boasting its non-logical nature and making all the more demands on "texture" for its unity, for outside the poem the far-fetched comparisons are awkward and meaningless.

In general, the poetry which the new criticism advocates, that in the "main line" of the English tradition—with varying emphases, authors such as Shakespeare, Donne, Crashaw, the two Herberts, Vaughan, Marvell, King, Pope, Hopkins, Eliot may be enumerated—is poetry which exhibits a strong texture or non-abstractive organization and thus resists the simpler forms of abstract analysis. How this is true in detail there is no room here to show, and we must leave the demonstration of the point to the reading of the poetry and of the more relevant criticism. The dethronement of Milton and his "architectural" style is a part of the converse of the picture and occurs together with a rejection of academic classicism in favor of Jonson's classicism that manifests itself in his "rooted and racy

Englishness."[26] For Jonson's devotion to the Latins and Greeks is found in his poetry embedded in the economy of the English language. The more academic classicism, faced with our incapacity at our present two thousand year distance to reconstruct tone and even feeling in the classics, except very imperfectly even with the most exhaustive scholarship, turns to some extent to the reading of classical language poems for their abstract conceptual content and for such things as meter considered pretty much in the abstract, with the result that coarseness of poetic organization or faulty total meaning comes after a while to be no longer recognized. When Milton, for instance, writes "L'Allegro," he makes a thing almost indistinguishable, as seventeenth-century lyrics go, from "Il Penseroso." The abstract denotations of the words in the two pieces differ, but the emotions and the total meaning which are further imbedded in the material of the poem and outweigh the denotations a hundred times, are almost the same in the one poem as in the other. "L'Allegro" is far off such a mark as that, for example, hit by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*:

> It was a lover and his lass
> With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
> That o'er the green corn-field did pass,
> In the spring time, the only pretty ring time.

The simultaneous rejection by the new criticism of Milton's classicism and of many of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romantics occurs for the same generic reason—the poetry's lack of respect for the interaction of the material with abstract meaning. In Leavis' discerning examination of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," the critic objects to the introduction of imagery which leads to abstractions that, within the poem, are disrupting rather than unifying forces. Contrary to Milton, the romantics exhibit not so much a lack of organization on a sensory level as a sensory organization incapable of unifying poetically the intellectual activity to which the sensory content of the poem gives rise.[27]

Within this whole economy of interests Eliot's critical

writing largely falls. Eliot has been interested in the metaphysicals; has, in fact, chiefly rescued them from oblivion. By a "sharpshooting" to which some have objected, perhaps because sharpshooters waste little of their powder, he has managed to pick off some of the followers of the Miltonic camp. In his own poetry the means of organization are those we find the new criticism interested in: imagery, bulking so large in his study of Dante; dramatic situation, found at the base of almost all his poems; metaphor and calculated ambiguity stretched to the apogee of its orbit; a classicism set deep within the economy of the English language. His earliest important contribution to criticism, the "Tradition and the Individual Talent" of twenty-five years ago, foreshadows in its way the doctrines of total meaning. Eliot sets each work of art in a context with all the rest, making them interact and yield meaning in a manner curiously like that of words. "No poet," he says, "no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone." And the poet

> is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.[28]

The poet must know what remains meaningful and what does not: his material is again not "ideas" but the already organized composite left by those who have preceded him. Within this material his poem finds its existence.

CONCLUSION

This is not meant to be a justification of everything that has been said in the name of the new criticism. The early manifestations of the movement were often brash, attended with the bluster of the self-constituted reformer rather than the humility of the investigator. Moreover, in concentrating on the organization which regards as integral the material connections of meaning, both Richards and Eliot have been led at times to state that "absence of intellectual belief need not cripple emotional belief."[29] This is true up to a point: our

knowledge of absolutes is so deviously attained and our direct knowledge so concerned with contingencies. We may forget for the moment the connections of the former and imagine that which the latter represents to be other than it is. Further more, it is not the abstract thought of the poem, as we have seen, which furnishes the typically poetic organization. But the complete divorce from fact which we might like a theoretical poetry to have is in fine never achieved, and we find that Eliot comes, in the last analysis, to say that it is not.[30]

The extremity of the position taken here by Richards and, with reservations, by Eliot comes undoubtedly from their awareness that it is not alone the abstract thought of the poem which furnishes the typically poetic organization. Competent readers always have a generous abhorrence for the unwary intellect which correlates a poem too closely with abstract utterance. This explains the insistence of the new criticism on the importance of the achievements of Gerard Manley Hopkins, "one of the most remarkable technical inventors who ever wrote,"[31] and of the later linguistic methods of James Joyce, whom Eliot is reported to have called "the greatest master of the English language since Milton,"[32] as well as their careful differentiation of contemporary poems which to the cursory reader seem equally "unintelligible." Joyce's later methods of writing and Hopkins', too, represent a perversion of language on the strictly logical level but a perfection capable of rare beauty on the level of poetic organization, where the discriminations are made between poems equally undigestible to the over-logical mind.

At times the new criticism has been accused of flirting with the notion of poetry as a means of salvation. Poetry it certainly recognizes as an important manifestation of human intelligence and an invaluable acquisition of human understanding. "It is the privilege of poetry," Richards says, "to preserve us from mistaking our notions either for things or for ourselves. Poetry is the completest 'mode of utterance."[33] This kind of dignity can be admitted for poetry, where our

knowledge is given its most satisfactory concretion; for abstract knowledge, in one way the most perfect of human knowledges, is in another way a very imperfect kind of knowing, whereas poetic knowledge, less clear because closer to matter, is also by that same token after a fashion more real. The practical if not theoretical recognition of this fact has gone far to establish much current criticism on solid ground. And if an awareness of the importance of poetry can carry Ezra Pound to aestheticism, Mr. Pound has Leavis to bring him back to earth.

Many aspects of the new criticism have been deliberately put aside to give unity to the present essay, which has attempted to show how a movement which deliberately considers the values of ambiguity and other manifestations hostile to clear intelligibility can come to any good. The answer proposed is that in so doing the new criticism sets itself the task of investigating truly poetic procedures. If it has been grossly empirical at times, we must remember that poetry's concern with the material side of being, justifies some laboratory methods, and we should recall that service has been done in equipping the critic with pieces of vocabulary which encourage him to elucidate a poem rather than to try his hand at kicking up in his readers only emotional effects of dubious relevance. Those who are familiar with that criticism which preceded in this latter fashion should welcome something new.

The new criticism deserves considerable attention and respect in philosophical circles, and perhaps in view of its origins it needs defense. It is a child of its age in rebelling against the world of Descartes and to a lesser extent against the world of Kant. But often enough this rebellion has the virtue of being philosophically self-conscious. Richards, for example, is deliberately attacking at the same time the doctrine of progress and the mind to which Cartesianism makes its appeal when he says that "The archproblem of truth is never solved one for all; though the more we know about it, the better our local decisions should be."[34] Moreover, the leaders of the new criticism have not only moved toward positions

where real philosophy becomes possible; they have done service in helping to correct a literary tradition which in its assumptions perpetuated an impossible substitute for philosophy. At least there has been a slacking off of the temptation to cultivate a style like that recorded by Thomas Sprat in 1667 as the ideal of the Royal Society, a style "bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as possible." Men no longer commonly feel obliged to avoid all but the "soft and gentle" metaphor which received Dryden's approval in *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* because it "does not shock us as we read it." And perhaps, then, we will not be considered devotees of the ephemeral progress ourselves if we see in the study of the mingling of the material with the abstract in poetry a way which some will follow to rescue human knowledge from the waste land of the Cartesian dichotomy and the Kantian aesthetic.

[1] For example, John Crowe Ransom in his *The New Criticism* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1941), p. 4.

[2] See Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937) and *Réalisme thomiste et critique de la connaissance* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1939). These two books have been fallen back on throughout the following discussion.

[3] Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. by Abraham Mills (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, n.d.), p. 147. These *Lectures* were originally published in 1783.

[4] James R. Boyd, *Elements of Rhetoric and Literary Criticism* (8th ed.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1887 p. 113. From the number of editions we can judge the popularity of this textbook.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

[6] See St. Thomas Aquinas, *In I Periherm.*, lect. 8: "Praedicatum comparatur ad subjectum ut forma ad materiam; et similiter differentia ad genus: ex materia autem et forma fit unum simpliciter" (the predicate is related to the subject as form to matter; and similarly [specific] difference to genus: and from matter and form there results an absolute one); see also *In I Periherm.*, lects. 5 and 10; and cf. *S. T.*, I. 58. 2. resp.; *Sum. c. Gent.*, I. 55; *S. T.*, I-II, 113. 7 ad 2; *In I Sent.*, d. 19, 5. 1, 2. Cf. Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Logic*, trans. by Imelda Choquette (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937), pp. 90-92, 86-90; and Bernard J. Muller-Thym, "The *To Be* Which Signifies the Truth of Propositions," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, Vol. XVI (1940), pp. 230-54.

[7] Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, pp. 153 ff.

[8] See I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 11 and 34.

[9] "Flimmer" is Richards' example, *op. cit.*

[10] *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language* (2nd ed.; Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1941), p. 967.

[11] See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I. 2. 1356a-b; Thomas Aquinas, *In I Anal. Post.*, lect. 1.

[12] The intellectual climate might be invoked to explain the Scotism of Gerard Manley Hopkins mentioned, among other places, in G. F. Lahey, *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 131-32. In a person of Hopkins' intellectual vigor, his Scotism can hardly be regarded as simply an aberration. With the artist's interest in saving the individuality of things (cf. his "inscape"—and his correspondence is full of this interest), perhaps it was when Hopkins saw the individual perishing in the Cartesian-idealistic chill, that he turned to the only other alternative which then seemed to offer itself as a radical remedy, and became Scotist.

[13] *Op. cit.*, pp. 10 and 6.

[14] I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929), p. 251, and *Coleridge on Imagination* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935), dedication, p. [v].

[15] *How To Read a Page* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1942) and *The Republic of Plato: A New Version Founded on Basic English* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1942).

[16] *Practical Criticism*, pp. 179 ff., esp. 181-82 and Appendix A, pp. 353-57. The precise meaning of intention as distinct from feeling and tone is not so very clear; one's intention *may* not be communicated, and if it is, it seems to coincide with feeling or, more probably, tone. See Ransom's discussion, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-65.

[17] *Practical Criticism*, p. 357.

[18] There are countless references to these items, and a few may be listed here besides those already mentioned: Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (for imagery); for dramatic situation see Ransom, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-63; for meter, Richards, *Practical Criticism*, esp. pp. 225-34, and "Gerard Hopkins," *Dial*, LXXXXI (1926), 195-203: "When will prosodists seriously ask themselves what it is that they are investigating?" (p. 203).

[19] Aristotle, *Poetics* 21, 1457b.

[20] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930), p. 3; see also Ransom, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-31.

[21] See Ransom, *op. cit.*, pp. 65 ff., and the references to Richards there, and see especially Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, pp. 116 ff.

[22] Empson, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

[23] Archibald MacLeish, "Ars Poetica," *The Oxford Anthology of American Literature*, ed. by William Rose Benét and Norman Holmes Pearson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 1501.

[24] *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

[25] "Andrew Marvell," *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1932), p. 262.

[26] F. R. Leavis, *Revaluation* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1936), p. 17.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 204-208 ff.

[28] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *op. cit.*, pp. 4 and 11.

[29] Richards, *Practical Criticism*, p. 278. See Eliot's essay "Dante," *op. cit.*, pp. 218-20 and 229-31 n., and "Shakespeare," *ibid.*, pp. 114-115 and 118.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 231.

[31] F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1938), p. 159.

[32] F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 135.

[33] *Coleridge on Imagination*, p. 241.

[34] *How to Read a Page*, p. 241.

THE NEW CRITICISM AND SCHOLARSHIP

By

CLEANTH BROOKS

Some century and a half ago, Richard Farmer defended the methods employed in his famous *Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare*: "In the course of this disquisition, you have often smiled at 'all such reading, as was never read': and possibly I may have indulged it too far: but it is the reading necessary for a Comment on *Shakespeare*. . . . Nothing but an intimate acquaintance with the Writers of the time, who are frequently of no other value, can point out his allusions, and ascertain his Phraseology."

In the years that have passed since Farmer wrote, the historical and linguistic methods which he helped to initiate have become thoroughly normal and orthodox. The triumph of historical scholarship has been complete; and the modern literary scholar, confident of the value of such methods, feels no need to apologize for occupying himself with "all such reading, as was never read." We have been able to establish texts far more accurately than earlier scholars could; we have recovered the poet's language beyond the haphazard guessing of subjective commentators. In the case, not only of Shakespeare, but of all the major and most of the minor poets of the English tradition, we have succeeded in "pointing out [the] allusions and ascertaining the phraseology." Small wonder that the staple training of future English teachers in our great graduate schools has been, for many years, a discipline in linguistic and historical methods.

Yet, in late years, there has been something of a reaction against the exclusive emphasis on such training; and it is easy, therefore, for even well-informed people to conceive that the

"new" criticism is somehow hostile to historical scholarship. Some of the limitations of the orthodox scholarship have been pointed out and the claims of the critical discipline have been vigorously urged. I think that the claims of criticism have been very properly urged. I have urged them myself. But to ask that more attention be given to criticism is not to demand that we abandon training in linguistics or in textual criticism or in literary history or in the history of ideas. Such a conclusion is entirely unwarranted. Yet, for good reasons or bad, many people have leaped to this conclusion; and perhaps the best service, therefore, that could be rendered the "new" criticism (as it has been called for want of a better name) is to attempt to clear up this confusion.

The task should not be a very difficult one. Even a little reflection on the nature of the critical problem as conceived by the new critics should be enough to indicate that such criticism must, in many cases, lean heavily upon the history of language, upon the history of ideas, and upon literary history generally. Indeed, in proportion as nuance and connotation are allowed to have importance, in proportion as ironic inflection, word play, or rhythmical variation take on significant meaning, in proportion as symbol and metaphor bulk large in determining "what the poem says"—in short, in proportion as the critic makes use of the characteristic methods of William Empson or R. P. Warren, he needs to know precisely and exactly what the poet wrote. He, of all critics, will be prepared to make use of the labors of exact scholarship. In fact, the more exquisite labors of the careful scholar look forward to such criticism as their proper end; or, to state the matter conversely, such criticism as that described requires, and rests upon, the expert labors of the scholars.

The new criticism, therefore, properly understood, is the criticism which is on principle *least* hostile to orthodox scholarship. This is not to say, of course, that the critical lion and the scholarly lamb—or should my figure be reversed?—can be counted upon to lie down peaceably together. I dare not

predict that millennial event. There are many quarrels that remain to be settled: for example, how shall we train the future teachers of English? On the linguistic sciences? On historical scholarship? On criticism? On all three? And, if on all three, in what proportions? I do not propose to gloss over real difficulties. But I do want to stress the fact that criticism and orthodox scholarship are not on principle inimical to each other, to emphasize the fact that they actually supplement each other, and to suggest that they can, ideally, coalesce with one another in the person of that fabulous monster, the perfect critic.

II

A concrete example will make this point much more clearly than any series of abstract generalizations could. A concrete example will not only make the point clear—it may even go far toward proving the point for us. But I must hasten to say that I cannot claim to be the fabulous monster myself. What I shall have to say makes no pretensions to being an instance of the ideal union of scholarship and criticism of which I have spoken. I shall be quite content if it manages to suggest some of the potentialities of such a union.

I should like to take Bishop Corbet's "The Fairies Farewell" as my example. It has long been regarded as a charming poem, but neither the scholar nor the critic has taken it very seriously. And yet it is a poem, I believe we shall find, worthy of the attention of both scholar and critic.

Farewell, rewards and fairies,
Good housewives now may say,
For now foul sluts in dairies
Do fare as well as they;
And though they sweep their hearths no less
Than maids were wont to do,
Yet who of late for cleanliness
Finds sixpence in her shoes?

Lament, lament old abbeys,
The fairies lost command,
They did but chance priests' babies,
But some have changed your land;
And all your children stol'n from thence
Are now grown puritanes
Who live as changelings ever since
For love of your demaines.

At morning and at evening both,
You merry were and glad;
So little care of sleep and sloth
These pretty ladies had;
When Tom came home from labour,
Or Cisse to milking rose,
Then merrily went their tabor,
And nimbly went their toes.

Witness those rings and roundelays
Of theirs which yet remain,
Were footed in Queen Mary's days
On many a grassy plain.
But since of late Elizabeth
And lately James came in,
They never danced on any heath
As when the time had been.

By which we note the fairies
Were of the old profession,
Their songs were Ave Maries,
Their dances were procession;
But now alas, they all are dead
Or gone beyond the seas,
Or further from religion fled,
Or else they take their ease.

A tell-tale in their company
They never could endure,

And whoso kept not secretly
Their mirth, was punished sure.
It was a just and Christian deed
To pinch such black and blue;
Oh, how the commonwealth doth need
Such justices as you!

Now they have left our quarters,
A register they have,
Who can preserve their charters,
A man both wise and grave.
A hundred of their merry pranks,
By one that I could name
Are kept in store; con twenty thanks
To William for the same.

To William Churne of Staffordshire
Give laud and praises due;
Who every meal can mend your cheer
With tales both old and true.
To William all give audience,
And pray you for his noddle;
For all the fairies' evidence
Were lost if it were addle.

The first stanza serves notice that the poem is something more than a gently nostalgic bit of reverie. The opening lines are witty. The reader is to be upon the alert. The obvious instance of wit, of course, is Corbet's breaking down the fossilized expression "Farewell" into its component parts and galvanizing these into independent life once more:

For now foule sluts in Dairies
Doe *fare* as *well* as they.

But there is more verbal play here in the stanza than meets the eye—at least than meets the twentieth-century eye. And here the historian of language can be of help. One knows,

of course, that the word "hussy" derives from "housewife"—a fact which indicates that "housewife" was at one time pronounced "hussif" and later still "hussy." How did Corbet himself pronounce it? And when did "hussy" acquire its disparaging connotations?

Limitations of space forbid a complete discussion of this question, and, indeed, there is no need for lengthy discussion. All of the relevant information is to be found in the *New English Dictionary* which indicates that, at the time Corbet wrote, "housewife" was frequently pronounced "hussy," and that the disparaging meanings now associated with "hussy" had already developed alongside the neutral meaning of the term. Indeed, the *New English Dictionary* concludes its comment on "housewife" with this sentence: "But many still [that is, in 1899] pronounce *huzwif, huzzif* . . . even when they write *housewife.*"

Corbet, then, wrote in a period in which the same word could mean "housekeeper" and "slut." The possibility of a play on the two meanings was open to him, and apparently he took advantage of it. For Corbet seems to be saying that "good hussies," now that the fairies have departed, fare no better than plain hussies.

But the future bishop is tactful. He is careful not to imply any slackening in the zeal for cleanliness on the part of the good hussies, even though supernatural rewards are no longer bestowed. Cleanliness is doubtless its own reward, and the good hussy is not mercenary. Even though the fairies have departed, she sweeps her hearth "no less/Than maids were wont to doe." The homely example patterns perfectly the larger case. The orthodox Christian believes that virtue is rewarded—belies that there is a heaven. And yet he must repudiate any suggestion that the virtuous man is virtuous, merely for the sake of the reward, on principles of sheer self-interest and simple good-husbandry, or good housewifery.

The poet and bishop-to-be steers, in the poem, a perfectly orthodox line, avoiding the heresy that lurks on either hand.

The good housekeeper, he makes it plain, will doubtless be a good housekeeper regardless of whether the miracle of the sixpence occurs or does not occur. And yet, the supernatural reward was proper and life is a little more drab now without it.

If you feel that I am being over-ingenious in reading into this first stanza the hint of a parody on the Christian doctrine of rewards and punishments, I shall have to admit that perhaps I am. Let us pass over the point, therefore. But the larger point, namely, that Corbet's poem is, for all its charming banter, very much concerned — and quite seriously concerned—with what was happening to Christianity in England, I must insist upon. The next five stanzas are full of it, and we shall miss the poem completely unless we are prepared to see just how seriously the poem engages the larger problem.

At this point we shall need all the help that the historian can give us: we shall need to know what an Anglican Churchman thought of the Puritans and what he thought of the Catholics and how he interpreted the Reformation. (Here, again, limitations of space forbid me to review in detail what the historian has had to tell us). But in addition to the general question there is the more particular question of what Corbet himself thought about such matters. On this topic we should be especially grateful to the historian, but the records are meager, and perhaps we shall have to depend finally upon the poem itself. But if we keep our wits and succeed in *reading* the poem, we may be able to tell the historian, with some confidence, what Corbet did think.

To return to the poem: it is ironical that, after condoling with the good housewives on the loss of the fairies, the poet should next extend his condolence to the abbeys. The expression of sympathy is, one must admit, rather left-handed. For the poet manages to suggest that the dissolution of the abbeys was the consequence of the fairies having lost "command." The fairies were not, it is true, entirely blameless. They sometimes took liberties with priests' babies. (One wonders whether

Corbet was not familiar with Chaucer's joke about the limitour having dispossessed the fairies and having become himself the only incubus left in the countryside. Perhaps so, perhaps not.) At any rate, in this poem Corbet proceeds to argue that the abbeys, in view of what has happened since, ought to be willing to forgive the fairies' habit of stealing priests' babies and substituting changelings for them; for there is a more heinous sin, a more material change: "some have changed your land." The children who have been spirited away from the abbeys under the later and more sinister dispensation have lived ever since as changelings indeed. They have grown up to be Puritans "for love of your demaines."

Here is the economic interpretation of history with a vengeance. The fairies, Corbet implies, may have been puckish and naughty; the new spirit, on the other hand, is solidly materialistic. The abbeys may well rub their eyes as they look at their former children.

What the typical children were like before the fatal change is suggested in the third stanza with its reminiscence of Tom, the farmboy, and Cisse, the milk-maid. The world which they inhabit is a merry world, but the glimpse which we have of it does not reveal it as an idle world or as an unconvincingly idyllic one. It is indeed a workaday world—

> When *Tom* came home from labour,
> Or *Cisse* to milking rose . . .

but it is not a world of drudgery.

> Then merrily merrily went their Tabor
> And nimbly went their Toes.

Again, if I seem to read too much shrewd and knowing commentary into the stanza, I must point out that the last four lines are merely an extension and illustration of two earlier lines of the stanza:

> So little \are of sleepe and sloth
> These prettie Ladies had. . . .

The fairies are not associated with torpor or idleness—they preside over a world occupied with its daily affairs, though, as I have remarked, not a drudging world. The occasional sixpence left in the shoe of the good housewife is thoroughly relevant to the general point. It is a neat and cleanly world, a merry and cheerful world, though certainly not a Puritan's world over which the fairies once had command.

I should not pass over the third stanza, however, without some notice of an important and perhaps shocking implication. To whom does the "You" of the second line refer? To the fairies? To the common folk? To the abbeys? I think that it will be difficult to argue that the reference is not to the abbeys. But in that case, the poet is *complimenting*—from the Puritan viewpoint *accusing* — the abbeys for having been "merry and glad"; and he is implying that this merriness proceeded from the liveliness of the fairies. From the Catholic point of view, this, of course, is scandalous if not blasphemous; though from the Puritan point of view, it is excessively complimentary, since it rebuts the stock Puritan charge — which Milton, for example, was never tired of insisting upon—that the monks were slothful drones.

How closely the poet presses his suggestion of a connection between the fairies and the Catholic Church, I shall discuss a little later. But there can be no question, as we read the fourth stanza, that the exodus of the fairies is associated with the Reformation. The last fairy rings date from the age of the last Catholic sovereign:

> But since of late, *Elizabeth,*
> And later *James came in*
> They never daunc'd on any heath
> As when the time hath bin.

The logic by which Corbet proves that the fairies have left England, needless to say, will hardly satisfy the logician. "Who of late, for cleanliness / Finds sixpence in her shoe?" Who indeed?, we may well ask. Corbet does not need to fear an affirmative answer. He can count upon the rationalism

that has "of late" come to dominate England. Yet, if no sixpences have turned up, of late, that fact proves that the fairies have disappeared. The poet slides over his little *post hoc, ergo hoc* quite blandly. And he is just as adept at getting rid of embarrassing evidence.

For the fairy rings do remain "On many a grassey playne," as Corbet well knows. A modern scientist, of course, would call them the result of the growth of certain fungi of the class *Basidiomycetes*. I have seen them, by the way, in this country, though I must confess only in the state of Tennessee, — a fact which doubtless has something to do with cultural conservatism and with the passage by that commonwealth of an anti-evolution law.

The fairy rings do remain on the greenswards, amid the green grass, circles of darker green, but Corbet anticipates any reasoning which would allow these to be used as evidence that the fairies *still* dance in England. These fairy rings remain from Queen Mary's days, he tells us. The fairies themselves have fled.

Noticing the fast and loose way in which Corbet plays with logic, the reader may dismiss his "proof" that the fairies were really Catholics as charming nonsense. That it is, assuredly. But it is not mere nonsense. How easy it is to take the fifth stanza as mere nonsense, the early editions of Corbet show. For in the first and third editions, the editor or compositor makes the poem say that the fairies have fled "beyond the Seas / Or farther *from* religion" — a reading which takes the poem at the lowest estimate, as if the little pagan creatures found religion inimical to them. Corbet's point in making the fairies devoted little martyrs, exiles *for* religion's sake, stems from the fact that he realizes that they have a great deal to do with religion.

Corbet has felt the charm of what he doubtless regarded as pagan elements in the Catholic religion. He has felt its charm, and, though he himself repudiates it, he sees its superiority, at points, to the rather arid conception of religion gain-

ing favor with the Puritan movement. If Corbet teases his Catholic contemporaries by proving that the songs of the fairies were "Ave Marys", or that they conveniently covered up the occasional misconduct of priests, the teasing is obviously not acerb and bitter. The fairies represent a kind of native poetry close to the roots of which the communicants of the "old profession" remained. Superficially, Corbet's criticism of the Puritans is less sharp; yet, in the context as a whole it is far more damning. He identifies the rise of Protestantism, particularly in its Puritan manifestations, with commercialism and with a kind of materialism hostile to all poetry, whether that of the older church or that of England's peasant folklore.

And Corbet himself? Does he expect to find a silver sixpence in his shoe? Or does he expect ever to have the vision of the

> faery elves,
> Whose midnight revels, by a forest side,
> Or fountain some belated peasant sees,
> Or dreams he sees, while overhead the moon
> Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
> Wheels her pale course?

I am afraid that the answer is no. There are senses in which Corbet may be regarded as a "belated peasant." His biographers have frequently referred to the coarse and earthy streak within him. But peasant or not, Corbet was entirely too "belated" historically to have had any doubt in deciding — had the vision occurred to him—that it could be anything more than a dream. He had himself bade the fairies farewell long before he wrote his poem; but, in bidding them farewell, he had some knowledge of what he was giving up and what merry England had given up when "of late *Elizabeth,* / And later *James* came in."

I have badly misrepresented the poem, and my own position with regard to it, if I have implied that the poem is a calculated defense of the middle-of-the-road Anglican position. It is not that, of course. And the last three stanzas make it

plainly evident that it is not. The bantering tone of a mock-lament is broadened toward farcical good humor as the poem comes to rest in a compliment to William Churne of Staffordshire, the old servant-man of Corbet's father-in-law, Leonard Hutten. The fairies have departed but they have left the old servant as a custodian of their charters—"A Man both wise and grave," who can entertain you at any meal with fairy lore.

To *William* all give audience,
And pray ye for his Noddle;
For all the Fairies evidence
Were lost, if it were addle.

But though the poem certainly does not commit the sin of taking itself too seriously, it will be a very superficial reader who can cheerfully take the poem at its own discount. We should not allow the obvious drollery of the ballad to conceal from us the real depths of seriousness which it touches. Surely, in the light of the religious controversies of the time, the subtle and brilliant insight into the interrelations of Catholicism, Puritanism, and Paganism cannot be an accident. Or, if, fearful lest we may attribute too much self-conscious design to the author, we are constrained to call it an accident on Corbet's part, it is surely one of those "happy accidents" which an earlier day used to attribute to the plenary inspiration of the Muse and which critics of a later day still find to constitute, oftentimes, the deepest expression of the total mind of the poet.

Just at this point one could wish for aid and possible confirmation from the literary historian. But we know little of Corbet's life. So far as I know, the only modern life is that by J. E. V. Crofts published in the 1924 volume of *Essays and Studies.*

It is a charmingly written essay and the biographer has knit together all the scraps of information about Corbet that are to be found. Yet Crofts hardly succeeds in giving us the essential character of the man. What was Corbet like inside? Was he, as Crofts suggests, a cynic? What was the relation.

ting upon practical themes? Again the answer is found in the nature of acted drama, in the fact that it makes its appeal to the mass, and must make it instantaneously. The laugh or the tear must come to everyone as the word is spoken or the pathetic gesture made, and to accomplish that the dramatist must base his wit or his situation on habits of thought and feeling, on customs and taboos, which are more or less universally possessed and accepted by his audiences. Even if he pioneers into new habits or customs, as Ibsen and Shaw once did, his point of departure is known and accepted, and his hero or heroine gains dramatic stature by defying convention. An accepted custom is an obstacle we can all understand, and the defiance of obstacles is the essence of drama. So the plight of the dramatist to-day lies to a great extent in the lack of widely accepted customs and habits of thought, in the confusion of feeling, in the loss of ancient social taboos and the absence of any new ones to take their place as obstacles. There is little sufficiently concrete for his hero to oppose, either for tragedy or comedy. There is only chaos.

If we think back over the drama of the past we shall perhaps be surprised at the limited scope of dramatic themes. A few themes, certainly, have done duty over and over and over. The Restoration comedy of manners, which set a style for English comedy that has been supreme to our own day, and in which many of our most famous plays have been written, was so restricted in theme at its inception that one can scarcely tell the plays apart, and in spite of the professors' praise and the moralists' reproaches, the public now find most of them excessively boring. Their theme was always the same —the comic absurdity of anybody who didn't conform to the prevailing social mode, who didn't "belong" (plus of course a liberal dash of amorous intrigue). The same theme, or formula, was still the springboard of the comedy of manners when Wilde and Jones and Shaw brought it to a new flowering in the 1890's. In Wilde and Jones those who did not conform were made ridiculous or suffered. Shaw, to be sure, varied the

formula. In his plays those who *did* conform were made ridiculous. But that was merely the reverse Irish. In either case there had to be something everybody recognized to conform to.

Recall, if you can, Henry Arthur Jones' comedy, "The Liars," acted in this country by John Drew in the late '90's. It is a capitally constructed play, and was a huge success. How long since you have seen it revived? The heroine goes to dinner at a country inn with a gentleman, gets home late, and has to trump up a lie to explain her absence to her husband. All her friends have to lie for her, till the complications are hilariously tangled. But young people reading the play to-day look bewildered. "Why didn't she call her husband up and tell him to leave the key under the mat?" they ask blankly. "Was she a slave or something?" Thus effectively has Nora Helmer done her work! When Nora slammed that door in a Norwegian theater in 1879 and sent the audience out into the night pale with excitement, she had violated a taboo, or kicked over a custom, which was universally understood and almost universally accepted, and her act had an immediate and tremendous dramatic impact. It has none to-day.

Moreover, the real central theme of the original comedy of manners, always more or less underlying its successors, the theme of social superiority, by which it was possible to achieve ridicule of all who did not "belong," is no longer practical. Nobody accepts it. The Four Hundred are dead as the dodo, in spite of the society pages of the metropolitan papers. In 1845 a famous play was produced in New York, written by a woman who herself belonged to the fashionable world. But her play, "Fashion," was a satire on this world, or at any rate on the climbers who sought to get into it, and her climax was the overthrow of the fashionables by a noble farmer from Cataraugus County. Edgar Allan Poe, to be sure, said the play resembled the "School for Scandal" as "the shell resembles the living locust"; but the public loved it and felt it to be deliciously democratic, and it is still pleasantly revived as a museum piece. What dramatist would set out to-day to satirize

Society and rouse an audience to emotions of satisfaction at the overthrow of its pretenses? Society has long since satirized itself into obscurity, and as a theme either for ridicule of those who don't "belong" or those who do is no longer of any practical use to the playwright.

One of the plays which foreshadowed modern drama in English was Tom Robertson's "Caste." It had a life of forty years in the playhouse, we in America liking it no less than the English middle classes. We rejoiced at the marriage of nobility with commoner and sensed all the dramatic difficulties and conflicts that entailed. As late as 1893 we were titillatingly horrified at the idea of Aubrey Tanqueray marrying a "pretty lady," and saw his asinine attempts to make a "good woman" out of her as a social problem. He had outraged not only Victorian morality but good manners, the social setup. When this play was revived in 1940, poor old Aubrey was merely an ass—and a very dull one. All he had violated was common sense. And Paula was—well, what she had always been. The theme of marrying above you, or below you, is no longer practical. "Above" and "below" have become terms entirely relative to individual character, not social caste. The dramatist has lost the entire background of audience response which once made the spectators tingle with expectancy at the first indication that King Cophetua was falling for the beggar maid. He would shy hastily away from this theme now if, by any chance, it should enter his mind.

No candidate for the doctorate in literature has yet counted, so far as I am aware, the number of plays which hinge upon seduction. He would doubtless have to seek the collaboration of an astronomical mathematician if he did. When I was a child and frequented the old Boston Museum, dramatizations of Dickens were in fashion. *David Copperfield* was dramatized as "Little Em'ly," and at the final curtain poor little Em'ly was being shipped off to Australia to escape her shame, much to my distress because nobody could, or would, tell me what her shame was. Anyhow, she had to go. And

obviously, it was the seduction of little Em'ly which the dramatist of that era found to be the most effective theme for a play in Dickens' story. We may pass over "Faust," which the last time I saw it acted in English, less than fifteen years ago, emerged on the stage also as a seduction story, and rather silly. Again Nora has done her work too well. The innocent maiden seduced by the slicker is an historical curiosity now. The ready tear she once inspired is not ours to shed. We simply don't believe in her any more, and we most assuredly don't ship her to Australia. Even if we admit she occasionally exists our whole attitude toward her has changed. One more ready theme of the dramatist has gone into the discard.

Another ancient standby of the dramatist was the double standard. This theme of course generally involved adultery, which led toward comedy if the husband offended, toward serious drama if the wife transgressed. Naturally. As late as 1910, in a play called "A Man's World," Rachel Crothers (who was vindicating her sex by writing dramas as good as those of any male contemporary) attacked the double standard with vim and conviction. Perhaps things haven't turned out quite as Miss Crothers and her generation hoped; they urged a single standard for the man as well as the woman. So far as one can gather from contemporary literature and observation, women have adopted the double standard instead. But either way, the theme is exhausted. It is no longer practical.

One of the most ancient of themes is the revolt of children against parental rule. The most recent of the famous plays on this theme is of course "The Barretts of Wimpole Street." But that is an historical play; we could hardly accept it as a picture of contemporary American life. None of our children would submit to any such outrageous tyranny even if we had the courage to try to exercise it. The American audience to-day simply does not admit the right of a parent to dictate to the grown child, and such parental dictation is no longer a well-recognized dramatic obstacle for the child to overcome, or be

overcome by. Another theme has become impractical. Of course parental affection and the ambitions of parents and children are still valid dramatic subjects.

II

What themes are left for the dramatist in our present world? A consideration of recent plays by playwrights of recognized merit is illuminating. Roughly, these plays fall into four categories of dramatic conflict. The first, and until very recently by far the largest, category was that which set forth an economic conflict, the struggle of the hero with poverty or with "social injustice," which to most authors of such plays is another name for poverty. From Galsworthy's "Silver Box" to Maxwell Anderson's "Saturday's Children" or Odets' "Waiting for Lefty," the villain of the drama was poverty, the dramatic conflict was against economic odds. Whether the writer represented the humanitarian belief in social reform left over from the late 19th century or the new leftist ideology made no difference in the practicality of the theme. All audiences could understand economic pressure. And of course they still can. Only, alas, we have had so many plays on this theme of late, and they have so increasingly flaunted propaganda for an ideology not too popular to-day, that the public is weary of them, and a wise dramatist would hesitate long before using the theme again.

In the second category are those plays in which the characters are in conflict with boredom, with dullness, with a stale, flat, or restricted life, sometimes as in Barry's "Hotel Universe" because of psychological maladjustments and the time-spirit, sometimes as in the plays of Odets because—or so he would have us believe—of the inequitable division of wealth in capitalistic society. In this category should be placed perhaps Elmer Rice's fine "Street Scene," a Pulitzer prize winner. In the face of "Street Scene" and Odets' "Awake and Sing" it is impossible to deny the practicality of this theme, to deny that it meets a ready understanding in a modern audience. But it

contains two grave dangers for the dramatist who employs it: first, that he sets his characters against an obstacle which is real enough, but yet vague and intangible and which we are never quite sure is not within the characters quite as much as outside them: "the fault, dear Brutus, is in ourselves." And, second, that the dramatist will yield to a kind of vicarious self-pity and his characters will whine. Odets' characters have increasingly become whiners, increasingly less the victims of a new society imposing dullness and futility on them, than dull, futile people not worth writing plays about.

The third category contains the recent plays which seek their theme in the timeless conflict of good and evil, and there are a rather surprising number of them. They seek escape from the realistic restrictions of contemporary society in the recesses of the human soul. Obviously they cannot be written by hack dramatists, and obviously they can seldom if ever be comedies. Among them are many of the tragedies by Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson's eloquent poetic play, "The Masque of Kings," and in less degree other of his poetic works, and Philip Barry's too little appreciated "Here Come the Clowns." Here is a high and classic theme, above the chance of change and custom, and that it has been resorted to by our leading dramatists in an age of realism is perhaps significant.

The fourth category would include such plays as might be found which showed the protagonist in conflict with the modern spirit of doubt, irresolution, confusion. In spite of "Hamlet," a hero who confronts doubt, irresolution, confusion, and cannot resolve them in himself, is not an attractive hero, and the play in which he figures will be unsatisfactory. That may explain why expressionism, which came out of a tired Europe before the World War, never took hold in America. We wanted, and still want by a deep instinct of our natures, to see chaos resolved, not worse confounded. We desire the artist to see a way through the muddle and show it to us. We wish some sort of positive action. We ourselves are confused, certainly. All our ideas and beliefs are in flux. But we desire

the artist to help adjust them, not merely express the confusion.

That is why, no doubt, Robert E. Sherwood's "Abe Lincoln in Illinois" was such a success. In this drama we saw our national hero a prey to doubt, to irresolution, to confusion, and then we saw him winning through to belief, to a dynamic faith, to direct and stirring action. That the faith which sparked his action was a faith in human freedom and democracy was of course doubly significant at this time. Mr. Sherwood's more recent play, "There Shall Be No Night," also a great success, voices more tragically but no less eloquently a faith in freedom, in the supreme dignity of the individual human spirit. His Finns have no time to discuss their doubts, still less their boredom. They have to go out and die. Such plays as these suggest that this theme, when so handled, is more practical just now than some of our doubters suppose, and may point a way to a dramatic renaissance.

None of these categories of recent practical themes affords much comfort to the writer of comedy, though S. N. Behrman has been clever enough to make something of them in his wryly witty fashion. And none is of too much service to the second-rate dramatist who keeps the theater going, and always has. There are never enough first-rate ones to keep one-quarter of our theaters open and our actors at work. Yet the theaters must be kept open and the actors at work or soon you will have no theater at all for them to be shown in when the masterpieces come along. In all rich eras of the theater, when the best plays were written, there was invariably a lively production of inferior but sufficiently entertaining drama which was the backlog of prosperity. This was possible because in all such periods, including our own era of greatest productivity (from the turn of the century to 1928, the era of realism) certain styles were set and accepted, certain themes were readily understood, certain emotional reactions could be relied upon from every audience to a given situation, and the lesser men could slide down the grooves of custom with security and success. The grooves of custom have been broken to bits. The

background of audience reaction is no longer to be relied upon. The well-tried themes which the lesser writers could handle because so many before them had plowed the path are no longer practical. No doubt the genius in any age will find a way to reach his audience, will make his audience understand and respond to whatever theme he feels deeply impelled to expound. But genius is a rare commodity always, and never more so than in the theater. The ordinary dramatist to-day, so important to theatrical prosperity, is in a plight. He can no longer find the themes to raise that quick and sympathetic response from an audience which is the absolute necessity of acted drama. The themes this age offers him are too difficult or too bewildering for his grasp.

SHAKESPEARE AND AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIP

By

ROBERT ADGER LAW

With two notable exceptions American contributions to world knowledge of Shakespeare may be said to begin with the year 1901. The two exceptions one must allow are the work of Richard Grant White, whose twelve-volume edition of Shakespeare was first published 1857 to 1865, and that of the elder H. H. Furness, who began his Variorum series of the plays, the greatest of all American monuments to Shakespeare, with *Romeo and Juliet* in 1871, to be followed by ten more plays in that century. White was also the author of *Shakespeare's Scholar* (1854) and of *Studies in Shakespeare* (1885), both of which are frequently cited by modern scholars. Dr. Furness, whose successive volumes continued to appear well into the present century, delivered a series of lectures on Shakespeare which are discussed in one of the earliest numbers of *Modern Language Notes.* Yet it is as competent editors of Shakespeare that both men are remembered to-day.

Apparently, American research, unlike the English and German, found sufficient interest throughout the nineteenth century in the study of linguistic problems, Old English, Chaucer, and the ballads, neglecting the Renaissance. *PMLA,* which began publication in 1884, lists among its contents through 1900 exactly six Shakespeare articles. Last of these is J. B. Henneman's "The Episodes in *1 Henry VI*" (1900), probably the only paper of present scholarly value. *Modern Language Notes,* founded 1886, contains for almost the same period nothing of importance about Shakespeare or his contemporaries.

After 1900 the story is different. The year 1901 saw the

publication of Lounsbury's *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist,* Thorndike's *Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare,* Furness's Variorum *Twelfth Night,* and Fuller and Baker's articles in *PMLA* on the perennial problem of *Titus Andronicus.* Before the first decade of the new century ended, Lounsbury had produced his *Shakespeare and Voltaire* and *The Text of Shakespeare,* Thorndike his *Tragedy,* the elder Furness had edited *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Antony and Cleopatra,* while Furness junior edited *Richard III* and revised *Macbeth,* Mark H. Liddell began the ill-starred Elizabethan Shakespeare with richly annotated *Macbeth,* Neilson issued his one-volume edition of the *Complete Plays and Poems,* Gayley edited the first volume of *Representative English Comedies* with several important studies by American and British editors of Shakespeare's early contemporaries, Root published his *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare,* Schelling *The English Chronicle Play* and more comprehensive *Elizabethan Drama,* Charlton M. Lewis analyzed *The Genesis of Hamlet* and E. N. S. Thompson *The Controversy Between the Puritans and the Stage,* while Tucker Brooke carefully edited both *Shakespeare's Plutarch* and *The Shakespeare Apocrypha.* This list in itself is surprisingly rich, but to it should be added several quite notable studies in the same decade that specifically reveal facts concerning Elizabethan theatres and stage conditions: *Some Principles of Elizabethan Staging* by George P. Reynolds, *The Shakespearian Stage* by Miss Albright, Murray's *English Dramatic Companies, 1558-1642,* Baker's *Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist,* Alice I. P. Wood's *Stage History of "Richard III",* Dean Gildersleeve's *Government Regulation of the English Drama,* and C. W. Wallace's sensational discoveries concerning Blackfriars Theatre and the acting companies.

In the space now at disposal it would scarcely be profitable for one to yield to temptation by giving a chronological list of noteworthy American contributions to knowledge of Shakespeare, decade by decade. Suffice it to say that such a list would show consistent progress, exemplified in the year 1944,

which saw Hyder Rollins's magnificent Variorum edition of the *Sonnets* brought to light along with T. W. Baldwin's meticulous investigation of Shakespeare's *Small Latin and Lesse Greke.* A more helpful procedure at present would possibly be to indicate several lines this progress has followed, and points whereupon American scholars have seemed to throw most light into dark corners.

First, as to the editing of plays and poems. Fortunately, despite the loss of both Furnesses before they had at all completed their editing of all the plays, the Variorum series is still being issued under the sponsorship of the Modern Language Association of America and the general editorship of Joseph Quincy Adams. Besides the *Sonnets,* Rollins has edited with the same care and competence another volume of *The Poems,* Samuel B. Hemingway the *First Henry IV,* and M. A. Shaaber the *Second Henry IV.* Early publication of *Richard II* and *Troilus and Cressida* is promised. In each of these books the vastness of the editorial task accounts for occasional lapses, but the general result is one in which all Shakespearians can honestly take pride. Certainly comparison between any of these late volumes and the earliest ones issued by Furness show vast improvements made in fullness of content, selection of significant material, accurate scholarship, and general arrangement. That the entire series may be completed is earnestly to be desired.

Neilson's single volume of 1906 was itself a notable achievement in the establishment of a new text and in the remarkably concise separate introductions to the plays. The recent revision of this volume (1942) by Neilson and Hill has abandoned the compact phrasing, but contains a penetrating general introduction by Neilson, a newly revised text, recognition of contemporary research and its findings with reference to each of the plays and poems, explanatory footnotes, and far better print. Yet some will not accept the judgment of Theodore Spencer that this book is now the best one-volume edition of Shakespeare on the market. They prefer

the Kittredge single volume with Kittredge's own text, his own staccato comments on each play and poem, and a glossary that no one else could have composed. The death of Professor Kittredge in the midst of his editing of each play in a separate volume was a profound tragedy. About a dozen plays with full introductions and complete annotation are now in print, and a few more are promised. Had the entire number seen the light during his lifetime, our knowledge of the actual meaning of what Shakespeare wrote would be the richer.

These are not the only scholarly editions of Shakespeare. Two more series, comprising forty volumes each, under the editorship of a number of trained American scholars reached completion before 1930. First of these was the Tudor Shakespeare, ambitiously undertaken by Neilson and Thorndike and involving the co-operation of some forty separate editors from all parts of America. The regret is that so much valuable manpower was not conscripted for longer labor. In each case the editing involved quite a brief introduction, almost as brief a body of notes, and a short glossary to explain the Neilson standard text. The result was hardly representative of the highest American scholarship, with the possible exception of the Neilson and Thorndike *Facts about Shakespeare* and Carleton Brown's edition of the *Poems*.

The second series to be completed was the Yale Shakespeare, headed by Cross and Brooke and edited by various members of the Yale department of English. Though these volumes are uneven in quality of workmanship, their general level is higher than that of the Tudor, while Tucker Brooke's individual editing of *First Henry VI* and his composition of the handbook *Shakespeare of Stratford* deserves high praise.

Conventional college requirements for class study of twenty-odd Shakespeare plays, explained and briefly annotated, have been responsible for the bringing out of three extremely well-edited texts of the desired type, done respectively by Hardin Craig, by Brooke, Cunliffe, and MacCracken, and by Parrott and Telfer. From the standpoint of pure scholarship

one regrets that three independent editions treat almost exactly the same plays, but demand seems to have governed supply.

Several other individual plays have been well edited for classroom use by Adams, Neilson, Baldwin, Hazleton Spencer, George C. Taylor, and men of comparable reputation. Commercial value is a distinct incentive to editor and publisher alike. Uncommercial studies of the text of *Hamlet* by Parrott and Craig, and of the text of *Lear* by Madeleine Doran should not go unnoticed.

Next to editing, the most valuable contribution American scholars have made to the knowledge of Shakespeare's background is probably in the field of Elizabethan stage history. Since 1910 and the issuance of the books mentioned earlier we have seen such works as Adams's *Records of Herbert* and *Shakespearean Playhouses,* T. S. Graves's *The Court and London Theatres,* Thorndike's *Shakespeare's Theater,* Hillebrand's *Child Actors,* Withington's *English Pageantry,* Lily B. Campbell's *Scenes and Machines,* Baldwin's *Origin and Personnel of the Shakespeare Company,* R. B. Sharpe's somewhat speculative *Real War of the Theatres,* Reynolds's sound and thoroughly documented *Staging of Elizabethan Plays,* Bentley's *Jacobean and Caroline Stage,* worthy sequel to Chambers, and John C. Adams's recent study of *The Globe Playhouse.* Much of this microscopic research has, of course, rested on bases laid by such eminent Britishers as Sir Edmund K. Chambers and Dr. W. W. Greg, but foreign countries frankly recognize the international debt created by our scholars' labors.

The bold adventure of Joseph Q. Adams in attempting to write a *Life of Shakespeare* in 1924 before the final revision of Sidney Lee's biography, has been justified by its subsequent reception. To most students in the United States, at least, Adams's is the *Life* preferred to-day for its vivid interpretation of the persons and the action involved. The late Hazleton Spencer's *Art and Life of Shakespeare* dwells rather on stage history, than on biographical events, but the vigorous, almost cocky, phrasing, together with an unusually full critical

bibliography, gives the volume marked individuality. Here should be named, in addition to the handbooks of the Tudor and the Yale Shakespeares already mentioned, those of R. M. Alden, later revised by O. J. Campbell, and of Parrott, presenting in popular form similar material and some recently discovered. The magnificently planned but rather inadequately executed *Shakespeare Documents,* under editorship of B. Roland Lewis, contains a wealth of information for graduate researchers. Parrott and Ball's *Short View of Elizabethan Drama* deliberately omits Shakespeare from the picture while presenting portraits of his contemporaries and much stage history.

Turning to more definitely aesthetic criticism, one may head the list with Kittredge's pregnant tribute to Shakespeare in a lecture marking the Harvard University celebration of 1916. Frequently recognized in England as the one American Shakespeare critic is E. E. Stoll. His aggressive, skeptical, almost cynical, attacks on Bradley and other Romantics of earlier years have given way to milder, more sympathetic essays in a half-dozen books, still incisive and provocative. Other contemporary writers on the bard are Mark Van Doren, sensing poetic values, and O. J. Campbell, often illuminating yet tending over-frequently to the discovery of satire. Lily B. Campbell in *Shakespeare's Heroes: Slaves of Passion,* Walter Clyde Curry in *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns,* Hardin Craig in *The Enchanted Glass,* and, more recently, Theodore Spencer in *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man,* have each sounded depths with a knowledge of Elizabethan intellectual habits unknown to previous centuries.

Vain would be any effort to record the many significant research articles published by American scholars with reference to individual Shakespeare plays and poems, even of specific lines, in American, English, and German periodicals. Bibliographies help, especially those appearing annually in *Studies in Philology, PMLA,* and *The Shakespeare Association Bulletin.* Fortunately, as Miss Tuve has observed, the new science of bibliography has developed along with the growth of inter-

est in research. In graduate English instruction throughout the land, stress is everywhere on Shakespeare. Not only have "a score of universities," to use a British scholar's phrase, become "centers of research," but several of our great libraries have accrued a wealth of Renaissance material exceeded only by the Folger and the Huntington Libraries on opposite coasts. Almost a dozen scholarly journals have also been established, most of them under the sponsorship of various educational institutions, to put into print results of literary or linguistic research, yet authors seem still to be outdistancing the supply of print paper, so great is their activity.

If a full list cannot be here presented, it may not be out of place to mention two or three dramas presenting problems to the solution of which Americans have contributed. Such problems arise out of the Henry VI plays and *Titus Andronicus.* British critics have consistently given credit to Peter Alexander for a theory as to *Second* and *Third Henry VI* that owes much to the thorough research of Madeleine Doran, now of Wisconsin. On the other hand, Tucker Brooke and C. A. Greer have furnished considerable basis for skepticism of Alexander's conclusions. *Titus Andronicus* now belongs to America since the Folger Library possesses the unique 1594 quarto. Discussion by Adams, Kittredge, Bolton, Price, and others bids fair to establish long-sought truth concerning its origins and Shakespeare's authorship.

Inadequacies of this sketchy survey are evident. Its purpose is merely to record some details indicative of larger trends. One significant weakness in the present state of American scholarship is its individualism, the result, possibly, of our magnificent distances. That Thorndike's valuable study of the *Shakespearean Theatre* and Adams's quite similar volume should be issued almost simultaneously was regrettable, as was the later publication within a year's time of three competing anthologies of Elizabethan drama, and two overlapping accounts of Shakespeare in America. It is possible in research, at least, to overdo academic freedom.

SHAKESPEARE

By

WILLIAM S. KNICKERBOCKER

We need not revive the question whether Shakespeare's plays are greater on the stage or in the active fancies of the reader, comfortably ensconced in the easy chair before a fire. Certain romantics, like Coleridge, DeQuincey, Lamb, and Hazlitt, seemed to think that at least some of the plays, especially the tragedies, display Shakespeare's genius in interpreting nature and human life only when read, whereas the distinguished contemporary Shakespearean, Stoll (with his disciples), lays, perhaps, too great an emphasis on the exclusively historical intention of Shakespeare to write plays to be enjoyed as they were and are performed. It is not necessary to raise this "either-or" option, since it is, in the nature of what is easily demonstrable, a purely invented distinction. Pragmatically, Shakespeare has held his own both as dramatist and as poet. His plays continue to enthrall us in the glorious illusion of the theatre and they exert a spell on our imagination and feelings when they are read, in accordance with our surrender to the magic of his printed lines. What may be stressed here is that, powerfully as a Shakespearean play may impress and move the person in the theatre who has never read Shakespeare, he is probably not so greatly moved as one who knows the play from earlier reading and study and who also comes to the performance with his sensibilities prepared by those who have written about it out of some total view, whether historical, impressionistic, or intuitive.

For Shakespeare is not only what his plays are in themselves but also what has been made of them by those who have brooded over them: by those who have studied his times,

the conditions under which he worked, his technique of language, metaphors, and dramatic contrivances, and the nature of his audiences. If Shakespeare is as various as poets have proclaimed him, then there is ample scope for a variety of interpretations. While it may be true that different interpreters may display Shakespeare in their own image, it would obviously be impossible for them to do more than reveal what Shakespeare has meant to each of them individually. They may color their portraits according to their own disposition but if they evoke fresh inspiration they exhibit chiefly the perennial power of Shakespeare to evoke vital response. The impacts of their disclosures may excite different effects in different readers but if they do no more than prompt a verification of their ideas by compelling a new examination of Shakespeare's own creations they have their value in what John Morley called "the possible utility of error".

The view of Shakespeare which is presented here can hardly be called original, except perhaps in the effort to utilize the results of scholarship and criticism insofar as they seem pertinent and relevant to my purpose. From time to time total views of Shakespeare are justified in an effort to re-compose appreciation for his art. The present time is especially auspicious, not only because enterprising lovers of his art like G. Wilson Knight and Miss Caroline Spurgeon have striven for some larger vision of his achievement as a whole, but chiefly because, with the development of the audible cinema, the art of presenting Shakespeare in a more widely distributed form opens up new possibilities both of interpreting him graphically, as well as reaching audiences in out of the way places. Just because we are in an age experimenting in theme and contrivances in a new medium, we are, I think, equipped with the necessary experience of understanding the experimental restlessness of Shakespeare. For Shakespeare was an experimenter in poetic drama whose trial-and-error efforts, exceedingly bold, were restrained by the practical considerations of financial success for his plays, by the influencing effects of the changing

tastes of his audience, by the competition of rival theatres, by the acting abilities of the particular company for which he wrote. He developed his talent for drama by the positive and influencing effects of these conditions: the main incentive was his dissatisfaction with his achievements and, over and above his concern for professional success, was his ambition to exert poetic power over the sensibilities of his audiences.

Primarily, I believe, Shakespeare was a poet, who sought in the theatre the opportunity to restore the fortunes of his family, but, in the course of utilizing the theatre as a medium for his art, discovered the immediate effects of the poem-as-play.

In the zest of experimentation with words, dramatic situations, and devices, Shakespeare preferred the stage to the printed book. Just as Plato discovered in the dramatic dialogue the artistic satisfaction of his aesthetic nature, using it as a work of art rather than as a vehicle of philosophy, so Shakespeare employed the nascent British drama and stage for the satisfaction of his desire to play on the emotions of living people. While we may, and should, so far as we are able, attempt to re-mount his dream of life by reaching him through the complete achievement of his work, while we may regard each of his plays as a band of color in the spectrum of his whole work, I think we may dispense with the beautiful idea which would make us suppose that at any one time Shakespeare himself possessed the full glamour of that white light or was attempting, play by play, to act as priest of that Shekinah. If any one truth emerges from Shakespeare's plays, it seems to be that life is relative, contingent, full of surprises; that unity is discerned through the constancy of emotion evoked imaginatively, stirred by visible and tangible objects, and excited by the hypnotic effects of rhythmed, melodious, allusive speech. The diversity of life is solved in the demonstrable unity of response in the audience, the constancy of the emotions

in obedience to the senses, assisted by the obbligato of the imagination.

Such a view excludes the idea that Shakespeare was a proponent of any particular or partisan religious, political, or economic scheme. I think questions concerning his Church, his politics, his idea of social and economic justice are impossible to answer and if they were answerable are irrelevant to an understanding and appreciation of his art, except possibly to disclose his own transcendence of them. If one attempted to discover his philosophy, by culling his philosophic utterances, one would find him quite contradictory, and perhaps after all, an Epicurean in ideas: he would be found to be putting philosophic remarks in the lips of his characters chiefly for the purpose of disclosing the character which uttered them, or for the purpose of exciting discursive reveries in his audience. This does not exclude the truth that whatever ideas are expressed in Shakespeare's plays by various characters did first inhabit the mind of Shakespeare himself, but to collate them in some categorical scheme is to go beyond the plays as poetic dramas aiming at imaginative and emotional effects and to regard them chiefly as documents of an exhibitive person who used the stage as a means of displaying his doctrine of life or as a doctrinaire subverting the stage to propaganda purposes. The reflective ideas may be found to be part and parcel of common wisdom of the time, phrased melodiously and aptly —often, outside their poetic and rhythmed form, they are found to be the merest platitudes redeemed by beauty of expression—and are of value in revealing not so much the mind or philosophy of the dramatist as of the particular character who says them. Their power inheres in the emotional qualities of the dramatic situation in which they are stated. Nor should I be understood as stating that Shakespeare was profligate or prodigal in his disposal of ideas which so deeply move us. The ideas expressed are part of his general intention to excite the reason and so preserve his dramas from the merest physical sensationalism: one of the aesthetic problems with

which he struggled incessantly throughout his career. The point stressed is that Shakespeare was not a particularly original thinker, in the sense that one of the great philosophers is; he frequently achieved profundity by his sensitive phrasing of accessible commonplaces in highly uncommon pithiness of diction.

If the implication is left that Shakespeare, in not being an original thinker, was also not a profound thinker, the whole question of our modern idea of originality in authorship is opened. Such a question reaches, I think, to the most important items in a right approach to an understanding of Shakespeare. The suspicion that Shakespeare was at least partly a plagiarist because most of his plays were dramatizations of stories he borrowed may, it is true, be buttressed by the criticism by his unfortunate contemporary Greene who has been thought to have accused him of wilfully pilfering others' work but, early as it was made in the career of the greater dramatist, it apparently made no impression on him. The question probably did not seem to him particularly pertinent, because he continued thereafter to the end of his writing career to appropriate whatever was available for his purposes, always altered and imperially transmuted. The question does not appear greatly to disturb later generations, though the fact has long been known and has provided scholars with a large area of investigation.

While Shakespeare was not alone in this practice, his "originality" is not impugned when we remind ourselves of the conditions under which he worked. Professor Baldwin has indicated with forceful evidence that Shakespeare, as a member of a particular dramatic company, was not as free in his choice of plots or manner of treatment as we of today might conceive *a priori*. The Elizabethans were not so aware of what we today would call a "socialised" drama but, without their knowledge of the distinction, the unfixed character of the theatre, the prevalence of experimental plays on the stage, two conditions tended to that form: there was

first, the hazard of meeting the unpredictable shifts of dramatic taste or interest in the audience; and, second, there was always the problem of having plays written to fit the acting abilities of the small number of actors of the particular company of which Shakespeare was an integral part. The *socialised* conditions are only partly true today on our stage: our contemporary dramatist is faced only with the first condition of creating, or satisfying, an achieved, public attention and interest. But a modern playwright is seldom compelled to draft an original plot, or alter an old one, to fit the acting and limiting conditions of a restricted acting company. On the basis of Mr. Baldwin's evidence, it is a reasonable conjecture that Shakespeare was in much the condition of a Hollywood scenario writer who is engaged to draft a plot or to alter some well-known novel to the acting possibilities of actors already engaged. The "shocking" conditions of Hollywood's treatment of well-known authors who are engaged for a particular purpose and who are not as free as they would be in writing for the stage would not, in all probability, shock Shakespeare, whose own experience was not greatly dissimilar. The difference chiefly lies in the fact that Shakespeare was not, like the author Hollywood engages, paid a specified sum for his work, but was dependent on what we should call the box-office receipts. The medieval guild-system was in its prime when he wrote and it was inevitable that the guild idea of mutual interdependence of its members pervaded the minds of the dramatic company. It was not impossible then that, though Shakespeare was the prime author of his plays, he had no absolutely free hand in the selection of his plot but also that after he had written it to fit the accessories of his stage and the particular persons who were to act it, in the actual performance it may have incorporated additions made by the actors. We know from Hamlet's advice to the players that the comedians were exhorted to refrain from improvisations but we may also interpret the first two scenes of the "rude mechanicals" in *Midsummer Night's*

Dream as a good-natured thrust at the practice of the company in improvising and attempting upon the dramatist's work.

More important than this, however, is the light which this throws on Shakespeare's erudition and wide range of information and possible allusion. When we consider Shakespeare's apparently encyclopaedic knowledge, we may rightly wonder how the country lad of Stratford, with only the education of its local grammar school, could display in his dreams so familiar an acquaintance with law, theology, history, politics which has made those earnest critics, the Baconians, doubt that Shakespeare wrote his own plays. His very freedom and audacious inaccuracies might have convinced them that Francis Bacon, if he wrote the plays, was so very un-Baconian but if we consider Shakespeare consulting members of his own company about matters he did not know, or their corrections of his notions after he had penned them, the problem appears less of a problem, after all.

There was, after all, some advantage in his not having been an undergraduate at Oxford or Cambridge. It is no laborious process to compare his plays with those of his contemporaries who were—like Marlowe, Green, Nashe, Peele, Beaumont and Fletcher and the great Ben Jonson, whose plays show the result of the peculiar British university training. Their very stability militated against the experimentalism and susceptibility to innovations which possessed Shakespeare: perhaps the academic taint of knowing too much restricted them in their pliability; certainly, it seems to me, their university conceptions impressed them—especially Robert Greene—seriously with the crippling awareness of their *status* as men of letters; Shakespeare's own dramatic company, his writing friends and acquaintances, his audiences provided, not indeed a university or its equivalent, but a sufficient *milieu* in which he moved with grace, absorbing with a kingly prerogative what impressed him as worthy. He became, as a result, to use a phrase of Sainte-Beuve's, a "secretary of the public", not too engrossed in some pathological state induced by over-exerted introspec-

tion of his moods and state of emotions, but a synthesizing, creative, power with a sovereign sense of artistry. Seen in relation to his immediate predecessors and contemporaries, he is no less unique in his achievement. Indeed, he reveals the greater stature through the conflict of his submissions to the conditions imposed upon him and his persevering insistence to utilize such freedom and creativeness as his quick eye perceived.

The form of his better-known plays subscribes to no antecedent formula but a sense of that form is to be derived from a comparison of the plays themselves. As he progressed in his actual experience of writing plays, he discovered empirically the effect of exciting devices: of the conjunction of certain situations, of the sorcery of wordage as well as of silences in dramatic tension. If he knew Aristotle's *Poetics,* either from his own reading or from the discussion of the university-trained members of his circle, he reveals no intention to subscribe to its precepts concerning the nature of drama. Certainly, though he had occasion, in *Midsummer Night's Dream* as well as in two or three other plays, to have one or more of his characters allude to Aristotle he made no use of it. Aristotle apparently exerted no rule over his shaping imagination. Nor, for that matter, did Sir Philip Sidney's brilliant criticism, that noteworthy attempt to alter the course of British drama in its most fertile period, *The Apologie for Poesie,* have any effect on the form of Shakespeare's plays. The form was conditioned, rather, by the two forces Shakespeare faced: the utilization of the acting possibilities of his company and the diverse nature of his audience. The company possessed at least one great tragic actor and one comic, and, at the height of his career, Shakespeare provided acting opportunities for both types. The audience, too, consisted probably of the more refined theatregoer as well as of the coarser sort: and to provide entertainment for both these types;—to make a large distinction—his task was to combine comedy with tragedy or tragedy with comedy without destroying the predominantly tragic or comic

intention of the particular play. The unity became one of major emotional stress as he attained his powers through experimentation but even this unity was the result, probably, not so much of some ideal, aesthetically conceived on general principles, of a pragmatic effort to try dramatic experiments on actual audiences. The truth of this would be more evident if we possessed or could with certainty reduce his earlier plays to their original form, stripped of later additions and deleted parts restored to their original places.

Not only did he combine sober with merry elements, but even in his more matured plays he did not hesitate to introduce elements like lyrics, pantomime, dancing which varied the appeal of entertainment. To call the form of Shakespeare's plays vaudeville unified by some one or two plots would be perhaps too bold, and not altogether justified, but there is some suggestiveness in the analogy. Seen against the Greek or French drama, its magnificent prodigality of variety displaying the versatility of its author, the Shakespearean drama might more adequately be described as verbal operas, not infrequently reaching lyrical heights by the actual invasion of singing, dancing, and instrumental music as integral parts of the work of art. Their conventional description as romantic dramas is true enough to differentiate them from either the classic dramas of the Greeks or French on the one hand or the realistic dramas of moderns like Ibsen, Strindberg, or O'Neill but not sufficiently discriminating to indicate their special power as unique, distinguishing them from the romantic dramas of his own contemporaries. The lyric poetry in Shakespeare here demonstrates its priority to the dramatic instinct: seeking to entertain by "excitements of the reason and the blood", evocative genius lies in his power to disturb the emotions and to satiate them by the purity of delight in music.

Experimentally, then, he achieved an art of the drama which, without knowingly challenging the basic concept of the Greek tragedy as delineated by Aristotle, actually revealed its obverse. Aristotle's observation that the effect of a tragedy

was the purgation of the soul through a *catharsis* or purgation of the emotions by pity and fear, Shakespeare achieved through its opposite. Mr. F. L. Lucas, the British scholar who has edited the work of Shakespeare's disciple, Webster, proposed this in his suggestive little book on *Tragedy*. In the appreciation of Shakespeare's dramas, critics have, in the absence of an equally authoritative aesthetic taking account of dramas which do not conform to Greek models, used Aristotle's *Poetics*—perhaps for too long a time. The effect of this has been to establish an absolutism for the superiority of the Greek drama—especially tragedy—over all others: to regard it as the standard by which Shakespeare, Racine and other writers of tragedy are to be estimated. The application of Aristotle to Shakespeare has undoubtedly been of service, if not in revealing the peculiar qualities of Shakespeare's art, then in exhibiting Shakespeare's indifference to the Aristotelian unities of place, time, and manner. Though it is true that this measuring and estimation of Shakespeare by Aristotle and the Greek tragedies has sometimes—as in Voltaire's dismissal of him as a "barbarian"—resulted in his disparagement, it performed the necessary preliminary condition of making us aware, in the presence of Shakespeare's extraordinary power, of the relativity of critical standards and of the necessity, under conditions other than *a priori*, of discovering by other methods both the processes by which Shakespeare achieved his effects and the reasons why they are so effective. This historical, inductive method has supplied a new and more adequate basis for the understanding of Shakespeare's unAristotelian drama —the necessary preliminary for a satisfactory criticism. By a knowledge of the development of British drama—its subjects, its characterization, its sense of dramatic situation, and of the influencing effects of its theatre, its stage, and its accessibility to physical devices (which we today call "props")—we learn that Shakespeare pragmatically—as, poet though he was, he also possessed common sense in using what was available to him—ignored any Icarean impulse to write his plays to con-

form to some antecedent formula—whether devised by himself, as his contemporary Ben Jonson did with the dramatic formula of "humours" or by Aristotle, Sidney, or any other theorist—and experimented (often in a "conglomeration of disparates") with plots, characters, verbal virtuosities, stage possibilities, and dramatic devices. As a result, in place of the "catharsis" or "purgation" of the soul, he surfeited the emotions—banqueted them as if in direct rebellion against Greek practice and Aristotle's precepts—by every means accessible to him in the resources of the theatre of his time. Whatever excited the senses by means of physical objects, like daggers, caskets, thrones, funerals, battles, rings, he adroitly used: whatever excited the imaginative or discursive powers, like reflective observations on the profundities and significances of life he also appropriately utilized at strategic moments in his plays to excite the latent sense of wonder and the appetite for reflection. By means of them he excited various human responses in his audience and by these means of excitement played upon the whole range of the feelings of his audience. Nor did he neglect the possibilities of emotional excitement by reference or allusion, however poetically veiled, to current events, prevailing prejudices or opinions, or living contemporaries.

In the pursuit of this principle of dramatic excitement Shakespeare discovered and displayed the peculiar power of native British genius in drama. Mr. Lucas has suggestively disclosed how naturally this principle fitted the English temperament. He explains the power of the Greek drama as arising as a religious device to sluice away the passionate, volatile emotions of a Mediterranean people: conversely, the British—one may explain it as a result of the ethnological mixtures, the effects of English geography—were, and still are, a shy, reserved people, suspicious of emotional displays in their private and political life, suffering perhaps from too long and sustained inhibition of feelings. They needed, in dramatic art, the opportunity of exploiting their controlled emotions and imaginations; of exercising, under the innocent and vicarious

conditions of their theatre, the play of feelings. As an experimentalist in the London theatre at a moment when the university wits had caused an arousing aeration of the drama (giving it direction from which it undoubtedly profited but which equally undoubtedly threatened exhaustion through too much weight given to words on the one hand and to situational bombast on the other) Shakespeare appeared, and with his superb sense of opportunity proceeded to mediate experimentally with the legacy of the university wits, to compete with rivals, and by keeping his eye always on the effects he sought to produce in his audience, audaciously appropriated what fitted his purposes. Sublimely indifferent to the envious assaults of those who may have felt as Robert Greene did, he pursued his imperial way from abortions to distinction. What might have made him merely a hack was, in his experimentalism, the occasion for discovering the deeply emotional possibilities of the English drama: his little regarded historical plays.

The relationship of Shakespeare's historical plays to his development as a dramatist has been notoriously neglected by commentators on his art. Their addiction to the Aristotelian categories of tragedy and comedy has doubtless been the cause. Since the histories fall conveniently into neither of these divisions they tend to fall out of perspective and to be ignored by Shakespearean interpreters. Perhaps, if Shakespeare had been completely free in his choice of material, he might have preferred, at the outset of his career, to engage his creative powers on projects more fruitful and less restraining than a rehabilitation of British history. But the prevailing patriotism (traditionally ascribed to the aftermath of the Spanish Armada) made such plays popular and the recently questioned assumption that his company possessed the script of a long play, the *Famous Contention*, which needed revision and adaptation, represents him modernizing it to compete with similar plays in rival theatres. If that assumption be true, to alter these

plays was Shakespeare's assigned work in which he had to discover possibilities not only for successful performance but satisfaction of his poetic and dramatic powers. "Required work" it may have been but the comparison of his product with the "obsolete play" on which he worked reveals the growth of his sense of dramatic characterization. His problem may easily be envisaged: not only was he limited in the choice of kind of play—namely historical—but to a prescribed period which had famous personalities, including royalty (about whom history and legend had formed fairly definite conceptions in the public mind). Only in selection of episodes and in creation of plausible characters was Shakespeare free to create but even here he was compelled to keep within accepted frames and not too violently to disturb these fixed conceptions. If he created episodes, he did so to exhibit in action the moral and spiritual qualities of these historical personages. He had another problem: to give to a series of contiguous reigns for more than a hundred years of one of England's most momentous epochs some unifying conception which would reveal not so much the shaping tendency of the supervising spirit of history, as the disjuncted annals and chronicles might yield, but dramatic effect through the unity of an epic idea. If we correlate Shakespeare's "freer plays" (comedies and tragedies) of his first two periods, we discover how, in the discipline of composing his histories, he was compelled to give substance to character and to seek in idea the unity of life in flux. In other words, little as has been the regard given the historical plays, we may find in them, from *King John* to *Richard III,* the real school of drama for Shakespeare's developing genius. They made the conditions under which he was compelled to rise above the caricature and satire of comedy to depict human beings whose incentives and motives were inspired by the plausible causes within the framework both of history and popular conception of the characters themselves.

Perhaps in this peculiar school of dramatic themes, Shakespeare, without being aware of the analogy, came nearest to

the shaping power of literary art under which the great Greek tragedians worked. Like them, he was compelled to operate within frames already familiar to his audience, which was in possession not only of the historical events depicted in his historical plays but of conceptions of the personages involved, either originated or popularly expressed by Elizabethan historiographers like Holinshed. The *ethos* which elevated the tone and manner of Shakespeare's historical plays was the newly developing patriotism, if not nationalism, of the English, itself deriving from the religio-political concept which resulted from the eighth Henry's separation of the English from the European Church. Some of the religious atmosphere which determined the nature of Greek tragedy, allowing for the religious fervor of Elizabethan patriotism, enveloped Shakespeare's historical plays in their high seriousness, their tragic note, their appeal to the fundamentally moral nature of the English. The story of the growing tragic conception which marks the historical plays contains the germ of the development of Shakespeare as a tragic playwright. While it is perhaps true that of the individual plays in this series, only *Richard II* and *Richard III* approach most nearly the tragic form, neither of these plays properly is a tragedy in itself, however tragic may appear the frailty of humans in the first or the designed and calculated evil in the last. The entire series of eight plays dramatize a continued historical tragedy constituting actually the conventionalized medieval conception of tragedy in the theme of the fall of princes but, in response to Shakespeare's audacious and adventurous imagination, went far beyond a conventionalized treatment of that theme, resulting in effect in a panodrama of a crucial century of British national existence through the rise and fall of an ideal conception of Kingship, reaching fruition in the person, and perhaps the reign, of Shakespeare's *Henry V*. If, in the composition of these plays, that concept is frequently blurred or lost in the distraction of other, incompleted, themes, the reason is to be located in the simple fact that the design of the

whole emerged only after the series was well under way. Had Shakespeare preconceived an architectural intention and design, his pattern might be more obvious than it actually is. But consideration of the order in which he wrote the histories not only explains the reason for the absence of any such architectonics but the way Shakespeare's dramatic imagination developed. Obviously, it never occurred to him in beginning the series midway with *Henry VI* that his Rose (or York-Lancaster) Cycle of British history plays might be played continuously, as the Wagnerian cycle of operas is sung, but had he had more leisure during his London days, had he not been under the compulsion of continual composition to meet the insatiable demands of his company for new plays, it is conceivable that he might have revised the plays in their present sequential order to conform with the architectonics which emerged in the course of his writing as the binding and overarching unity.

But, since the historical plays from *Richard II* to *Richard III* were not written in the historical order of the reigns they present,—indeed were not written in a period of Shakespeare's writing career exclusively devoted to historical plays—they may be regarded as the persistent discipline while he experimented with his cleverness and exhibited his virtuosity in early comedies like *Love's Labour's Lost, Two Gentlemen of Verona,* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* and in the single experiment in passionate tragedy—*Romeo and Juliet.* The historical plays, then, present the line of continuity of Shakespeare's dramatic development leading directly to the deepening of his sense of life's profundities in the four great tragedies. The historical dramas of this Rose Cycle were of that grandiose character which the tragic actors of his company demanded and in which their quality could be displayed. But even in them, scope had to be given to that actor whose specialty was comedy: hence the introduction of Falstaff, Shakespeare's admittedly greatest comic creation The necessity of writing comedies, during the period of writing the histories, was the probable

result of *giving* the comedians plays in which they were the major attraction, as well as to give the playwright freer play of fancy and inventiveness than the histories permitted. Behind the amazing diversity of the plays of his first two periods and the virtuosity of the playwright thus lay the conditioning power of the people for whom the plays were written. Not only was Shakespeare not a free-lance, but he was, at the beginning of his career, a nobody, without the credentials of a university degree and probably forced by circumstances to consent to conditions which he did not create. It was not a matter of magnanimity: it was a matter of reciprocity. Accepting the physical conditions as given, he was quick to sense the limiting and inhibitive, no less than the quickening and creative, possibilities of his materials and agents, and, within those boundaries, discovered scope for the more satisfying freedom in inventiveness caused by necessity.

The presence of at least one successful and influential tragic actor and another, equally popular and powerful, comic actor in his company accounts, one may conjecture, for what appears to be an aesthetic problem with which Shakespeare always strove until the vogue of tragicomedies popularized by Beaumont and Fletcher when, with his own comedies of paradox[1], he seems to have found a workable solution. How to combine successfully plots and acting parts for both kinds of actors? His early efforts in introducing episodes of comedy in serious plays, or the attempt, as in *Romeo and Juliet,* to introduce comic characters like the nurse have been aesthetically rationalized as "comic relief"; a sufficiently satisfactory explanation of what must often seem to a reader or playgoer to account for elements which are frequently extraneous and perhaps irrelevant. There is no reason to think that Shakespeare himself thought otherwise, however arduously he labored in the course of his experience to make such scenes or such characters less extraneous or irrelevant. His success in making even comedy conform to the dominant tone of his plays is plain in

the drunken scene in *Macbeth*, in Polonius and the grave-diggers in *Hamlet*, in Osric of *Othello*, but changing public taste and the popularity of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher gave him in *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *A Winter's Tale*, and *Cymbeline*, the opportunity to provide scope for the serious as well as comic actors. Yet, though this effort exercised him continuously, he was not merely the playwright who responded to the advice or orders of his company, or who was too subservient to the shifting of public interest in kinds of plays played, but he was always the poet who, accepting the exacting demands and conditions of his craft, dominated the audience by the sweep and glory of his inner vision, sense of beauty, and sovereign delight in exciting their imaginations and feelings in ways not exercised by his predecessors or contemporaries.

Experimentally, too, he found his stories among those already familiar to at least some of his audience and some other stories which were probably unknown to any of them. The question need not be raised concerning Shakespeare's erudition, however fascinating to scholars may be the labors involved in tracing the genealogical past of plots, incidents, and situations which may be found in his plays. The story of *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, was accessible in the English poem of Lord Brooke; perhaps it was so well known that Shakespeare dramatized it *because* it was well known, actuated by the same incentive as a cinema producer is when he appropriates a well-known novel like *Under Two Flags*, *David Copperfield*, or *Little Women*. That it resulted in a "tragedy" was an inevitable consequence of the nature of the story itself. Certainly the novel by Shakespeare's contemporary Thomas Lodge, *Rosalynde*, is an even clearer evidence of Shakespeare's experimental innovation when he liberally dramatized it in *As You Like It* with copious additions, and some deletions, not only to fit his stage but to fit it to the taste of his audience, the resources of his stage, and the acting abilities of his colleagues. The general availability of Roman and Greek history in the popu-

lar translation of Plutarch's *Lives* by Lord North offered tempting allurements during and after the writing of the English historical plays. Their delineation of moral qualities provided the kind of dramatic material, in which Holinshed was fairly deficient, for the English histories. Some of the Italian stories which he used were known through their English translation or adaptations in the popular "Golden Book" collections of miscellanies by Petty and others. If he exercised freedom in the dramatization of this material he was no less audacious and experimental. He revealed again his pragmatic sense in availing himself of synopses of stories already known, thus appealing to interest already created, and so was freed from the necessity of inventing original plots to give his powers scope in developing their possibilities.

Lest these comments tend to support the conception of Shakespeare which has been spreading in the last quarter of a century that as a pragmatic playwright Shakespeare was pragmatist chiefly (if not only) in the sense that he was a mercenary person of a crassly opportunist nature, it is necessary, in concluding this sketch of the playwright as craftsman, to give scope to our veneration of him as artist, and to remind ourselves of his personal temperament and character as a man.

"The idea that Shakespeare was first a man of business, and then poet," wrote Mr. Peter Alexander[2], "goes back at least to Pope...

> For gain not glory winged his roving flight
> And grew immortal in his own despite . . ."

an idea that was revived by Halliwell-Phillips in his *Life of Shakespeare*. The latter's portrait of the great poet 'working under the domination of a commercial spirit' stressed the idea, according to Mr. Alexander, to the "verge of inanity", representing "Shakespeare as a man destitute of a cherished literary design, writing at first only for a living and when success-

ful for affluence." The late J. M. Robertson also advocated this view, giving it the added strength of his prestige as an influential investigator. Robertson wrote of Shakespeare's "thoroughly practical or commercial handling of the problem of life, in a calling not usually adopted by commercially-minded men", describing Shakespeare as

> " not much cultured, not profound, not deeply passionate; not particularly reflective though copious in utterance; a personality which of itself, if under no pressure of pecuniary need, would not be likely to give the world any sign of mental capacity whatever.

Mr. Alexander also cites Dr. Joseph Q. Adams, now Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D. C., "who, writing of Shakespeare's friendship with the young Earl of Southampton, says, 'we may suspect that in choosing so young, extravagant, and ambitious a patron Shakespeare was exercising the shrewdness that characterized all his business enterprizes . . .' "

This conception of Shakespeare's mercenary character rests obviously upon conjecture. But conjecture here, whether scholarly or intuitively impressionistic, has very little objective material upon which it may be based. That Shakespeare derived an income from his acting to enable him to retire to Stratford and set up an establishment as an English country gentleman is not denied, but to assume that he succeeded as a *poet-dramatist* only because he had an eye to the main chance is to indulge in conjecture which is absurd. It would convince if it could show that Shakespeare earned his fortune only by the writing of plays, or that his chief source of income was from his writing, and not from his acting or the share he owned in the company. One may therefore well doubt that he gained his affluence chiefly or primarily from the proceeds of his literary efforts. No, pragmatist as he may have been in his sense of his craft, he may have been socially opportunist (if he was an opportunist at all!) in recognition of his

corporate responsibility as a writing member of a craft guild of players. In accepting the conditions which this responsibility imposed on him, he did not sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. Antecedent to the craftsman in him was the artist and the man. His art was the voiced disclosure of his own moral quality.

His sphinx-like silence concerning himself is a testimony to his modesty. That he published none of his own plays need not be construed as evidence here, since every one knows the Elizabethan conditions of literary ownership by the acting company once a play was sold to it, but that does not cancel the possibility that he might have written plays or poems to be printed only, and so "capitalized" his growing literary fame. The very absence of anecdotes about him contributes significantly to our inference that he achieved a distinction which is no accident in a man of active creativeness: to hide himself in his work. If Shakespeare had been peculiar, or eccentric, or unsocially aggressive, he could hardly have escaped the indictment of *personalia* which his contemporaries or immediate successors might have transmitted to us. But only by fugitive comments which they *did* transmit (and those few are tributes!) can we learn how he was regarded. "He was indeed honest," said Ben Jonson. "Of all styles," said Drummond of Hawthornden, "he loved most to be named honest." He might have succumbed to an impulse of reprisal when Greene so shabbily alluded to him as a "Shake-scene" but if he was aware of any temptation to be vindicative, he triumphed over it.

In any age, honesty, in this special Elizabethan sense, is a virtue more frequently honored in the breach than in observance. If we are to gauge the meaning that the word had for Shakespeare we may derive it from its use in various of his plays. It meant a fully-orbed, humanistic consecration to an inner and moral ideal of life which, while it did not regard the outer, environing world of circumstance and flux as necessarily hostile or unworthy, did resist its lures, when they conflicted or threatened to subvert one's "honesty". Honesty is rooted

in the very "blood" or nature of a man, and is to be distinguished from his "fortune". As Rosalind said to Celia: "Fortune reigns in gifts of the world, not in the lineaments of Nature." If there be a tension between them, that tension is relaxed when fidelity to nature (or "honesty") sways the tide of chaotic circumstance to serve the "fortune" of the honest, as in *As You Like It.*

[1] I am aware that this generic description of Shakespeare's later plays (*All's Well, Measure for Measure, A Winter's Tale, and Cymbeline*) differs from Professor William Witherle Lawrence's classification of them as "Shakespeare's Problem Comedies", but I suspect that the whole drift of Professor Lawrence's evidence and argument contradicts his description of these plays as "*Problem* Comedies". In short, though there *are* undoubtedly ethical problems in them, they are better defined, I think, as "comedies of paradox".

[2] *Shakespeare's Henry VI and Richard III*, Peter Alexander, Cambridge University Press, 1929, P. 207. The references in the rest of this paragraph are derived from the same context.

WHY READ MILTON NOW?

By

GEORGE COFFIN TAYLOR

To say that Milton should be read by all intelligent men at the present time may seem to the wise superfluous. When, however, three such distinguished and widely different people as the late Sir Walter Raleigh, conspicuous Shakespearean and Miltonian, my friend, Louis Graves, editor of the *Chapel Hill Weekly,* contributor to the *Saturday Evening Post* and to other select periodicals, and Robert Graves, recent author of *Wife to John Milton* and of a multitude of books, sane and otherwise, all seem to feel that Milton is a "monument to dead ideas," it may perhaps be not so superfluous after all to suggest why Milton is needed now.

In stating the case for Milton as a much-needed force just at present for the prevention of the continuation of a crumbling civilization many thoughts come to mind. The difficulty lies in deciding which to emphasize most heavily. Here are a few:

Possibly, if we have the gift to see it, what he said to Cromwell and the English people at a juncture almost exactly like that which confronts us all at this very hour, both by way of *praise* and by way of *warning,* is singularly appropriate for us all:

> [From the *Second Defence*] . . . Oliver Cromwell was sprung from a line of illustrious ancestors, who were distinguished for the civil functions which they sustained under the monarchy, and still more for the part which they took in restoring and establishing true religion in this country . . . the good and the brave were from all quarters attracted to his camp, not only as to the best school of military talents, but of piety and virtue . . . such are the services which you

(Cromwell) have rendered, as the leader of our councils, the general of our armies, and the father of your country."

Having praised his leader, he goes on to warn him, for Milton would not flatter Neptune for his trident nor Jove for his power to thunder:

[From the *Second Defence*] . . . Revere the fond expectations which we cherish, the solicitudes of your anxious country; revere the looks and the wounds of your brave companions in arms, who, under your brave companions in arms, fought for liberty; revere the shades of those who perished in the contest; revere also the opinions and the hopes which foreign states entertain concerning us, who promise to themselves so many advantages from that liberty which we have so bravely acquired, from the establishment of that new government which has begun to shed its splendor on the world, which, if it be suffered to vanish like a dream, would involve us in the deepest abyss of shame; and lastly, revere yourself; and, after having endured so many sufferings and encountered so many perils for the sake of liberty, do not suffer it, now it is obtained, either to be violated by yourself, or in any one instance impaired by others. You cannot be truly free unless we are free too; for such is the nature of things, that he who entrenches on the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own and become a slave . . . if you shall not dread to hear any truth, or any falsehood, whatever it may be, but if you shall least of all listen to those who think that they can never be free till the liberties of others depend on their caprice, and who attempt nothing with so much zeal and vehemence as to fetter, not only the bodies but the minds of men, who labor to introduce into the state the worst of all tyrannies, the tyranny of their own depraved habits and pernicious opinions; you will always be dear to those who think not merely that their own sect or faction, but that all citizens of all descriptions, should enjoy equal rights and equal laws. . . . For it is of no little consequence, O citizens, by what principles you are governed, either in acquiring liberty, or in retaining it when acquired. And unless that liberty which is of such a kind as arms can neither procure nor take away, which alone is the fruit of piety, of justice, of temperance, and unadulterated virtue, shall have taken deep root in your minds and hearts, there

> will not long be wanting one who will snatch from you by treachery what you have acquired by arms. War has made many great whom peace makes small. If after being released from the toils of war, you neglect the arts of peace, if your peace and your liberty be a state of warfare, if war be your only virtue, the summit of your praise, you will, believe me, soon find peace the most adverse to your interests. Your peace will be only a more distressing war; and that which you imagined liberty will prove the worst of slavery. Unless by the means of piety, not frothy and loquacious, but operative, unadulterated, and sincere, you clear the horizon of the mind from those mists of superstition which arise from the ignorance of true religion, you will always have those who will bend your necks to the yoke as if you were brutes, who, notwithstanding all your triumphs, will put you up to the highest bidder, as if you were mere booty made in war; and will find an exuberant source of wealth in your ignorance and superstition.

His ability to keep alive in an iron age, though less of an iron age than our own, those things in so-called civilization which give us any right to look upon man as homo sapiens rather than as beast. Like Milton, we are living in an age of war. As one visualizes the whole world picture of today, men, even to a greater extent than in the age of Milton, have abandoned the idea of settling disputes by methods other than by violence and the sword. It is of peculiar importance, therefore, that we turn back to an individual living under conditions almost as desperate as our own, who continued throughout his whole life to put the emphasis on all matters tending to keep human beings from sinking back to the subhuman and primordial levels. There are, of course, notable instances of Milton's believing (particularly in the early part of his life) in the resort to arms in order to bring to pass conditions which he believed were right. Taken by and large from the beginning to the end of his life, he stands, however, for that emphasis which we need in the present hour, found in his sonnet to Cromwell, that "peace hath her victories no less renowned than war." As one studies his pamphlets on educa-

tion, he finds that despite Milton's concession to the necessity for military training in any educational doctrine concerns itself with the type of education that would make a man less inclined to believe in taking the short cut of bloodshed even to great and good ends.

Those who are today drifting in the direction of sacrificing almost all the rights of the individual to form a perfect state, will find small consolation in the works of John Milton anywhere, either in his poetry or prose. In an age in which we are definitely tending to sacrifice these rights in order to obtain better economic and social conditions for ourselves, it is good to turn back to one who would have been unwilling to pay the price of individual freedom for a perfect state of materialistic comfort. Milton could have conceived of no condition better calculated to bring about mental torture for any individual worth his salt, and debasement for the general run of men than a state in which every individual is put in a strait jacket in order to be well-fed.

In an age drifting definitely to the cult of the ugly as never before we need Milton as an apostle of beauty, ranking, perhaps, next to Shelley and Keats. Anyone even barely familiar with the trend of modern creative art or literature is distinctly aware of the general flow in the direction of the abortive, the abnormal, and the disgusting. I had better not recite instances as I would be stepping on the toes of some of my best friends. Despite his delight as an artist in handling, as few can, the revolting and the disgusting, as in his celebrated descriptions of Sin and Death at the gates of hell in *Paradise Lost,* Milton shows a great preference for the depiction of beauty in any form. He never, of course, adopts the religion of beauty to the same definite degree as Keats in his "Truth is Beauty, Beauty truth, that is all we know on earth, all we need to know," but he does have just as keen a relish for it. Surely, those of us now compelled to witness the ugliest manifestations of human nature revealed to us for centuries and being flooded with novels and plays which at-

tempt to educate us into the mystery of the hideous, can get aid and comfort from one who was complete enough to realize that both the ugly and the beautiful enable us to achieve a real conception of men and things.

Milton's breadth in regard to belief in the efficacy of political theories and system is of the utmost importance to us now when we are becoming fanatics as to the efficacy of certain systems of government for the salvation of mankind. In an age in which religion and political theory were inextricably bound together, he hated first the fanaticism of Catholicism, then of Episcopalianism, and finally even of Presbyterianism. "New presbyter," he finally explained, "is but old priest writ large." Each system as it comes to power generates tyranny from itself. The proper consideration of all his works will lead us to the conclusion that the human spirit is wider that any of the priceless forces which bear us onward and that Democratism, Communism, or any other "isms" are but contributions to the whole development of man.

In a period such as ours, characterized by the attempt on the part of supposed literary geniuses to side-step responsibility of the individual for his errors or crimes, it is salutary to go back to John Milton. Through both his prose and poetry one finds an unfailing belief on his part in the responsibility of the individual himself for rising above or falling below the level of the beast. One could multiply instances, but the instance of the grandest and most complete of Milton's villains should serve the purpose. Satan attempts again and again in *Paradise Lost* to side-step responsibility for his errors even as you and I, but always returns with intellectual accuracy to the realization that he would do everything all over again just as he had done it. In other words, that his choice of evil is deliberate and that the very quality of his own peculiar individual being results in his preference for vice rather than for virtue. If one may extend this principle to some of the modern critics, it may help to explain their cursing and animosity to Milton and their inhibitions as to a comprehen-

sion of his greatest qualities. It would be rather absurd to assume that it would be possible for creatures like some of our modern biographers, accustomed to living with noses under compost piles and tails in the air, to be interested in a star.

Perhaps those of us priding ourselves most on the excellencies of the modern temper might absorb some of the quality of Milton's courage. If he excels other English poets in any one particular matter, perhaps it is in his quality. When one considers what the rather small group of critics in each generation who have attempted to belittle him have experienced in contrast to what Milton endured and experienced, the matter of their eternal nagging should amuse rather than irritate those of us seeking to appraise him fairly. The unendurable experiences which Milton did endure with firmer courage than anyone else are perhaps too well-known to dwell upon. Three stand out more prominently, perhaps, than the rest: the loss of his sight, loss of respect for his wife, and the loss of what he held dearest in life—the cause for which his whole life was spent, an England emancipated from the tyranny of a king. That he should have been able to endure these three losses and still bear up and steer right onward is almost beyond comprehension. But it is easy to understand how Milton himself and his two greatest figures—Satan and Samson who would never be entirely crushed even by the most gigantic of opposing forces—should be misunderstood by a generation of writers whose main characters go down under any opposing force, however trifling. Milton's heroes who, even when run over, as it were, by a tractor or a tank, manage somehow to rise again, are in sharp contrast to most of our modern heroes of fiction who are flattened out when a baby carriage rolls over them and never get up again. It is small wonder then that men of the second sort should be entirely incapable of understanding men of the first.

In concluding, one wishes to remember Mr. Robert Graves's implication that Milton is precisely the man who should not be living at this time. One may differ with Mr.

Graves in regard to that matter if for no other reason than the certainty that he would counteract the tenderness of people like Graves. It would be good to hear his voice and to hear him marshal his most vituperative epithets as he took a shot at such matters, for example, as the following:

Our indifference as to individual ethics as a necessary quality in the men whom we willingly follow as leaders, the stupidity of the average healthy reader in allowing to be superimposed upon him the philosophy of life of nauseated debauchees writing novels out of over-sophisticated centres, the kind of novels written about sluttish people, for sluttish people who feel that by appreciating such they may be thought to be extraordinarily intelligent—and for his reaction to "renegade aristocrats" who have recently shown an exceptional ability to feather their own nests by fouling them.

How good it would be to hear that voice again, always raised against the cock-sure certainties, the nostrums of the age in which he lived, raised now against those of our own time. What mince-meat he would make of an educational system largely occupied with turning out crack-pots because it has lost sight of Milton's "knowledge is as food," that heavy, rich, intellectual food is not for those with mother's milk still showing on their lips, or with representative thinkers who lead us to hope that man, being naturally good and not naturally evil at the same time, of his own effort can arrive at a stage of social perfection on a materialistic basis only. How good it would be to hear him loose his splendid barrages of satire on the satirists of today ringing their changes only on the *old* thread-bare hypocrisies, conventions, fanaticisms instead of attacking those of today disguised in the more plausible forms of ideologies and the like; on our completely indiscriminate love of man, on our assumptions that zeroes, even when human zeroes, multiplied infinitely can make anything but zero, or counterpoise one single solid figure. On these and a hundred other assumptions and attitudes it would be good once more to hear not so much the "organ voice" of Mil-

ton, but that annihilating voice which tore to shreds and tatters everything around him which to him seemed superficial and false, low, and filthy.

Amidst the babel of voices, jangling and discordant, now rising in all quarters of the globe to reconstruct a world torn to shreds by the hate of man for man, his voice, we may be sure, would give carrying power to all emotional and intellectual forces which serve to elevate rather than degrade us in the scale of being. He would above all drive home the fact that no mere form of government can save man from man himself—from the war:

> "For what can war but endless war still breed
> Till Truth and right from violence be freed
> . . . In vain doth valor bleed
> While avarice and Rapine share the land."